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**How Well Do Media Cover Local Candidates and Local Issues?
The 1995 Ontario Election As Reported by Media in Windsor.
by
Johnna Christie Armstrong**

**A Thesis
submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
through the Department Of Communication Studies
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts at the
University of Windsor
Windsor, Ontario, Canada**

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Abstract

In the literature on media coverage of elections one aspect has been largely ignored in Canada, namely the extent and direction of media coverage of elections at the local level. This thesis attempts to fill that research gap by focusing on the role of newspapers and television news in Windsor, Ontario in the context of the 1995 provincial election. Coverage in the Windsor Star, on the local CBC newscasts, as well as regional newscasts on CTV and Global network are examined for differences on local versus provincial foci in election reporting with respect to parties, leaders, and issues.

Overall, local coverage of local aspects of the provincial election formed a small proportion of provincial election coverage, as the coverage of issues and leaders overshadowed local issues and concerns.

As expected, coverage of local aspects of the provincial election was fragmentary, while non-local coverage of the election was extensive. In this context the local paper, the Windsor Star, did a better job covering the local side of the election than did the local or provincial TV newscasts.

Issues dominated election coverage in 1995, with issues of substance prevailing over those related to campaign strategy. Issue coverage was followed in importance by coverage of the leaders.

The change in poll standings that occurred when Mike Harris took the lead from Lynn McLeod also influenced coverage. The PC's seemed to benefit from Harris' lead in the polls, but a leader's decline did not automatically signal a decline of coverage for the party involved.

Dedication

To the Armstrong Conservatives and the Duncan Liberals.

Acknowledgments

I must thank my friend upstairs for always being there and allowing me to live with hope, faith, and charity. Thanks are also due to Dr. Hildebrandt, my super thesis advisor who stuck with me through this entire process, its ups and downs and everything in between; to Dr. Cunningham for coming out of retirement to sit on my committee; to Dr. Soderlund for serving on my committee and for all his help along the way; to Dr. King for his recommendation and reinforcing for me just how much our cultural norms are embedded within us and for showing me a different use for a piece of chalk; to Dr. Romanow for his friendship, his recommendation to grad school, and calming my mother's fears when I started University; to Dr. Winter for his recommendation and for showing me how enjoyable lectures can be when it is obvious that the persons giving them love what they are doing.

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Thanks to Donevan for sticking with me through thick and thin and making me laugh through it all and for his technical expertise with the computer and desktop publishing.

I cherish the memory of those who did not survive my theses process: My mom, for the three doses of stubbornness Dad said I got from you, and you claimed I inherited from him; my dad, for my sense of humour without which I would not have gotten anywhere; Dr. Surlin, for being a great professor, friend and example, whose words of wisdom I will carry with me always.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Literature Review

Introduction

Modern politics are thoroughly influenced by mass media (Patterson 1994) and in the campaigns for public office the role of the media is highly visible (Wagenberg, Soderlund, and Romanow 1988). Modern election campaigns are impossible without the media, given their ability to reach large audiences quickly, cheaply, and conveniently. Media, elections, and democracy are closely related, according to Fletcher (1995). Political communication research has argued that candidates must rely on the media to spread their messages, allowing the media to define which issues and election themes will be focused on by selecting certain events and by framing the presentation of news (Entman 1993; Patterson 1994). According to Meyrowitz (1994) the press is the lens through which we see events. Jamieson, Auletta, and Patterson (1993) found even in campaigns like Truman's and Kennedy's in the United States that the media controlled the agenda.

According to Fletcher (1991) elections should be viewed as exercises in communication. Fletcher and Sottile (1997) noted that few public political communications take place without the media, making the media essential. Without news coverage much political activity would lose its significance. The news media are expected to publicize the accomplishments of politicians and inform the public about new policies and programs. The ability of the media to act as an

intermediary or channel between candidates and voters is best evaluated, suggests Nelson (1989), by analyzing the content of election news.¹

The agenda and coverage of an election are controlled by many forces: the characteristics media themselves, journalistic norms, technology, business interests, external events, and by politicians. Changes and developments in communications are closely linked to changes in electoral campaigns and in the behavior of the participants. For example, as news production itself becomes quicker paced, parties and politicians attempt to orchestrate coverage by providing a nugget of news each day. In addition, politicians play a role in determining the tone of the coverage by scheduling news conferences and photo opportunities just in time to take advantage of journalists' deadlines, limiting the editing or challenging of a story.

Through their selection of news, reporters and editors prime the electorate by shaping the images of leaders, defining campaign issues, and influencing the tone of the coverage. The debate continues over who ultimately controls the coverage and agenda of elections - the media, the politicians, or both jointly. Johnston, Blais, Brady, and Crete (1992) argue that the media influence agendas and that television news may prime and determine what voters consider important when evaluating candidates for office.

The media reach large audiences and can select which ideas and images will reach the public; in fact, most of what voters know about elections comes from news coverage. According to Weaver and Swanzey (1985) the media emphasize certain issues, thus increasing voter concern

¹

Nelson (1989, 102) claimed that in 1988 Bush realized that serious policy discussion would not get him elected as much as sloganeering and posturing.

over these issues and ultimately setting the public agenda of issues, filtering and shaping reality, rather than simply reflecting it. The media can edit and recontextualize a story, and as the 20 minute interview has evolved into an eight-second clip, careful and detailed explanation is omitted or at least simplified. Wenmouth, Shapiro, and Cutbirth (1983) and Patterson (1994) agree that the media can set political agendas for their audiences. Semetko (1989) concluded that election coverage and agenda setting is a joint product of an interactive process involving politicians and the media. Semetko, Blumer, Gurevitch, and Weaver (1991) argued that the idea that the media merely mirror the agenda of the politicians is too simplistic, that the relationship between politicians and the media is transactional. Similarly, Traugott and Lavrakes (1996) identified a symbiotic relationship between journalists and candidates.

The power of media organizations and their technological capacities provide a framework for decisions and agenda setting by the parties and their leaders, to which in turn the media adapt. Knowing that the media are powerful, politicians often plant a leak or fly a trial balloon to see how an issue will be covered by the media. Seymour-Ure (as cited in Siegel 1983) noted the media do influence politicians, and politicians jockey for control of their complex relationship with the media.

To Fletcher (1995) elections are mass media exercises in which the political parties and their candidates compete for attention, favourable coverage, and comment from the media. The media is the channel through which candidates try to get their messages out to the voters quickly and efficiently. The media determine what sound bites will be heard. Politicians aim to keep their messages simple, catchy, and to the point to get the attention of the media and voters.

During elections the media increase their coverage of politics dramatically. They make the campaign more visible through their selection and presentation of news and they help shape the images of candidates, define campaign issues, and influence the tone of the election. The capacity of the media, particularly of newspapers and television, to reach large audiences and to select which issues and images will reach the people is unmatched. Thus, the parties, their leaders, and candidates must communicate with the electorate through media coverage.

Given this importance it is surprising that not much research has been undertaken in the field of election coverage, as Fletcher (1991) noted in his reports on election financing and electoral reform. Frizzell, Pammett, and Westell (1994), Johnston, Blais, Brady, and Crete (1992) and others have begun to fill this research gap on election coverage, at least at the federal level. Ostroff and Sandell (1981) had noted a decade earlier that local coverage of campaigns had also not received scholarly or public scrutiny, and little research has been done on the relationship between media and campaigns at the provincial level since then.

In provincial elections, as in other elections, coverage of local candidates and local issues needs to be examined. We will investigate the who, what, how, where and when of the local coverage that occurred in the 1995 provincial election, as presented by the locally available media, in this case the Windsor Star and the CBC, CTV, and Global television networks.

Media Characteristics and Election Coverage

In the contest between different media, newspapers are thought to have more in-depth coverage of elections (Soderlund, Romanow, Briggs, and Wagenberg 1984). Newspapers have

more space to devote to coverage (Kahn 1993; Patterson 1994) and they are seen as a more authoritative medium than television (Soderlund, Romanow, Briggs, and Wagenberg 1984; Patterson 1994; Siegel 1996). However, according to Meyrowitz (1994) journalists are forced into selective reporting by smaller news staffs, fueled by a corporate demand for profit. Stempel and Windhauser (1984) found there was a trend toward less coverage, but equal space for candidates. Nelson (1989) noted that both American newspaper and broadcast media have limited space, but newspapers are less constricted. Patterson and McClure (1976) calculated that all words spoken on a network evening newscast would fit on one newspaper page.

TV coverage of the 1995 Ontario election is sure to vary to some degree from that of newspapers. As newspapers and TV have different characteristics, this may affect the way in which the election is presented in different media. However, Soderlund, Romanow, Briggs, and Wagenberg (1984), found that the issue coverage of federal elections by newspapers and television was not very different, suggesting either common news values, or that TV was setting the newspaper agenda, as suggested by McCombs and Shaw (1972). The trend toward similar coverage of elections by different media has been referred to as pack journalism - stories are reported in similar fashion regardless of which reporter writes them. Yet, according to Soderlund, Romanow, Briggs, and Wagenberg (1984) newspapers retain the ability to provide in-depth coverage of news stories, a mode to which television newscasts are not suited. Adams (1981) found that newspapers try to focus on local news, as newspapers serve local markets. Thus, newspapers may choose to focus on issues of local importance while leaving provincial and national stories to TV. In the 1995 Ontario election, was there more local coverage focused on

local concerns, candidates and issues in the Windsor Star? Or did the fact that the Windsor Star is part of a chain lead to the inclusion of many articles by Southam Queen's Park writers, reducing the need and space for local stories?

When carrying out a content analysis one must take into account the characteristics of the media under study. Johnston, Blais, Brady, and Crete (1992) found certain issues may predominate the coverage of an election depending on type of medium, its ownership, target audience, and the techniques used within the medium to carry the message. Semetko (1989) suggested when looking at the coverage of elections one should consider the prominence of the stories, extent of sound bites, and degree of key visuals, depending on the medium. Brosius-Bernd, Donsbach, and Birk (1996) pointed out that the relationship between any text and accompanying pictures is important for how the story is communicated to viewers.

Television news employs more moving pictures, as pictures and sound "speak to the viewer." Pictures give the news the appearance of authenticity, appearing to reproduce reality without filtering or comment. The news picture, especially on TV, creates the illusion that we are seeing the event with our own eyes, according to Landbeck, Mattenklott, Donsbach, and Brosius-Bernd (as cited in Brosius-Bernd et al., 1996). Frizzell, Pammett, and Westell (1994) noted that pictures, not words, tend to remain in the mind of the viewer.

Siegel (1996) noted that newspapers are perceived by many to be better suited than the broadcast media to present information because they are seen as more authoritative and reliable. The debate as to whether newspapers are a more authoritative and reliable medium than TV has been going on for years. Newspapers are often seen as better placed to cover the news because a

newspaper has more space to report stories, even if space devoted to campaigns has been decreasing both in newspapers and on TV. On TV, the story is told more quickly, but less in depth than in a newspaper story. However, visuals accompanying a story add to its authority, and thus give TV greater weight.

Technology has also led to changes in the way elections are covered (Courtney 1980). Television has revolutionized campaign coverage, and has even altered the very nature of election campaigns. Television has redefined the information environment transforming news coverage into what Sigelman and Bullock (1991) termed “videostyle” by focusing on personalities, photo opportunities, staged events, and the “horserace”, i.e., who is ahead in the campaign. The party leaders’ tours are tailored to television. Television has also influenced newspaper coverage. In many ways, television techniques are now replicated by newspapers.

Many election stories focus on the personalities of candidates Cundy (1994). Outcomes and events of the election are linked to the personalities of the candidates. The candidate-centered campaign works on television. Complex speeches are broken down into “sound bites” for inclusion in short newscasts. Phrases and slogans have become very important as candidates have less time to get their message across. Seymour-Ure (as cited in Nelson 1989) noted the press prefers stories that provoke controversies and stories that can be stated in simple terms, usually by reference to labels; the 1995 Ontario campaign saw slogans like “Common Sense Revolution,” “common sense for a change,” “workfare,” “learnfare,” and “patient based budgeting.”

Thus, modern media coverage focuses more on the horserace aspect, personalities, photo opportunities, and staged events, and less on the substance of the election. Horserace stories present both good pictures and drama. When the horserace stories are linked to polls, horserace stories appear more authoritative.

Pack journalism is the tendency for all reporters to concentrate on the same developments and interpret them in the same way. Patterson (1994) and Soderlund et al. (1984) found that coverage by newspapers and television was similar to one another. According to Fletcher (1991) voters receive essentially the same picture of the campaign regardless of place of residence or medium relied upon. Ansolabehere, Behr, and Iyengar (1991) suggest election coverage is homogeneous because of the focus of the coverage: elections are covered as horseraces and focus on personality characteristics of the candidates. Bacha, Kaid, and Johnston (1994) said chain ownership of the media leads to shared resources, thereby producing homogenization of coverage and insensitivity to local concerns. Chain ownership may also contribute to less local coverage. However, Soderlund, Romanow, Briggs, and Wagenberg (1984) found similar coverage in chain and independently owned papers. Press coverage of the elections did not vary significantly by region, language, or ownership. The group also noted that coverage in the print and electronic media was fairly similar. Davie and Lee (1993) indicated there would be some repetition between local newscasts. As they must compete for the same audience, different local news teams will reflect one another to a certain extent with similar news content. Finally, Fletcher (1995) found national late evening newscasts carry no local coverage of elections; even the highly rated supper

hour newscasts produced by local stations tend to use syndicated reports on the leaders' tours as the focus of their campaign coverage.

Tone (Slant) of Coverage

The slant of a story measures whether coverage is favorable or unfavorable to particular candidates, parties, or their leaders. This study seeks to evaluate whether the overall tone of the coverage varied for different leaders, their respective parties, and local candidates. It is possible that coverage could be positive toward a leader and negative toward his/her party and the party's local candidates. Furthermore, the tone of coverage might change during the campaign, especially when the lead changes, as was the case in the 1995 provincial election in Ontario.

Coverage of crowd responses to leaders is also important because it helps the reader gauge other voters' reactions to the candidates. In addition, it is a way for the paper to signal message reception, and thus amplify or contradict a candidate's words or actions as reported in the article.

Bauman and Herbst (1994) suggest that the status of candidates is important - whether they are leaders, incumbents, frontrunners, underdogs, or considered fringe candidates in an election can affect how, when, where, and how much they are covered.

Patterson (1994) reported that when a candidate leads by a wide margin, the coverage of his/her candidacy becomes less favorable. While the press criticizes frontrunners it is also negative toward losers and those losing support. It tends to praise those who catch fire - as long as the bandwagon lasts. Patterson points out that no one in a campaign can escape negative

coverage by the media entirely. And as campaigns progress, the coverage becomes more negative overall, according to Patterson, Robinson, and Sheehan (as cited in Hallin 1992). In contrast, Hallin (1992) himself found that television election stories remained neutral in tone. Kaid, Tedesco, and McKinnon (1996) found that news coverage of political ads was mostly neutral, but that was not tended to be slanted in a negative rather than a positive direction.

Election news is characterized by Patterson (1994) as coverage of the strategic game played by the candidates, and only secondarily about the policies and the leadership at stake. According to Nelson (1989) election coverage does not provide candidates with equal exposure, but rather parallels the candidates' perceived standing in the campaign.

The Extent and Focus of Campaign Coverage

During a campaign one would expect election coverage to be prominent in the media, i.e., on the front page of newspapers and at the beginning of newscasts. Axford, Madgwick, and Turner (1992) pointed out that the position of a story can affect the treatment and attention it receives. In turn, campaign coverage affects campaigns: Bacha, Kaid, and Johnston (1994) point out that leading items or those that appear most frequently in the media become the issues focused on by politicians in the campaign. As well, there should be a marked increase in election-related editorial material as the campaign progresses.

Leaders

Fletcher (1991) and Cocking (1980) found the leaders' images to be important in the election process. Soderlund et al. (1984) and Bacha, Kaid, and Johnston (1994) found leader coverage overshadows local candidate coverage and Sherrow (1992) noted that elections have become more personality focused.

Most stories on the election are expected to focus on leaders or on the issues in the election, but many stories may have more than one focus. The Windsor Star and the local CBC station are expected to cover the local elements of the election (examining local candidates and issues), whereas provincial and national TV newscasts should focus on the provincial leaders' campaigns as their news gathering takes place away from the local campaigns.

Issues

Inadequate reporting of issues is a widespread criticism of media coverage in the television era. Media, according to Patterson (1994), have the capacity to isolate particular issues, events, or themes in the news ("priming"); these prominent issues are then used to evaluate politicians. In some elections some issues will predominate in media coverage. Patterson (1994) maintained that voters see elections as fostering dialogue on key issues, but journalists increasingly cover elections as horseraces, focusing on who is ahead and who is gaining and losing. In addition, the media have increasingly covered the campaign itself, namely what is going on in the election process and the various campaign strategies. Such coverage may

include polls, campaign strategies, controversies among strategists, as well as the effect of voter reactions to the candidates.

Issue coverage in an election refers to the topics discussed within a particular article or broadcast. Research by Patterson (1994) suggests the importance of three types of election coverage: issue, trait, and horserace coverage. Analysis of the 1995 election issue coverage will show which issues were important. The 1995 Ontario provincial election certainly had what Sherrow (1992) labeled “hot button issues” - things that strongly concern voters. The Liberals stressed the healthcare issue. The Conservatives emphasized cutting taxes and the NDP focused on what they had done for Ontario over the past five years. These issues or topics are called “substantive” issues.

This study will examine which issues were mentioned most frequently throughout the coverage of the 1995 election. Fletcher (1995) suggested that voters may not pay attention to the election until the news media lose interest in the substance of the campaign and focus on the horserace. Mendelsohn (1993) found that leadership and horserace aspects were highlighted; the horserace view provided the frame used by television news for interpreting the campaign. Sinclair (1982) found horserace coverage in Britain as early as 1968; in 1972 horserace items increased during the latter days of the campaign, while coverage of substantive issues declined. Focusing on winners or frontrunners allows the media to capture what Lippman (as cited in Nelson 1989) called “the easy interest of the audience.”

According to Patterson (1994), the level of issue coverage varies between constituencies. In Britain it is twice that of the US. News items in Britain come from the politician, while in the

US they originate with the journalists. Given that Canada has ties to both Britain and the US, campaign coverage could fall somewhere between the American and British styles of coverage.

Polls

Polls are a fact of political life (Frizzell, Pammett, and Westell 1990; Traugott and Lavrakes 1996). Fletcher (1995) found that substantive coverage was being replaced by reporting of poll results. For decades, the media have reported election campaigns in terms of the strength of support for different candidates. Media polls are a way to improve the quality of this coverage and of campaign issues (Bradburn and Sudman 1989). Graber (1984) pointed out that news organizations tend to use polls to emphasize the effects of candidate strategy. Poll results can frame stories and drive coverage, and changes in poll standings can change the extent and tone of the coverage of a specific candidate and party, positively or negatively.

In the 1995 Ontario provincial election, leadership in the polls reversed as the early frontrunner, Lynn McLeod, was replaced by Mike Harris. This shift should be reflected in the coverage of the 1995 election. As the poll lead changed there may have been more lead stories about Harris, as he was suddenly recognized as a viable competitor or worthy opponent. Polls, according to Bauman and Herbst (1994) provide a discourse which is economical: no wasted words, just numbers. Polls are easier to report and interpret than some of the campaign issues. Polls appear to be simple and easy to read, while at the same time retaining high authenticity. They are seen as more authoritative than other news reports of the election as they are carried out by well-known organizations, such as Angus Reid or Gallup, often in cooperation with media

organizations that are seen as independent of the parties. Crewe (1992) concluded that polls have become key factors in politics, as they influence election dates, campaign strategies, and the course of campaigns. Frizzell (1990) reported that even though Canada has fewer polls than most Western countries, polls are an important media tool, in part because they limit how much politicians can control the agenda of the election.

In Canada, the status of a candidate and of parties in parliament before an election, and their perceived strength during the campaign may affect coverage patterns of the candidates and their respective campaigns. Grabe (1996) found in his study of the South African Broadcasting Corporation's coverage of the 1987 and 1989 elections that the parties who had the most voter support received more coverage. The governing African National Congress (ANC) received the most favorable visual portrayals during both elections. Stempel and Windhauser (1984) reported a trend in their study of the 1980 US presidential election toward less coverage, but equal space for leading candidates.

Table 1.1 shows the parties' standings in four polls during the 1995 Ontario election. This thesis will explore the impact of the change in the lead, as demonstrated by the polls, on the coverage of the campaign by the media available to Windsor voters.

Table 1.1 Poll results in the 1995 Ontario campaign

Poll Date	Date Published	Commissioned By	Conducted By	PC	LIB	NDP
1-3/5	15/5	London Free Press	London Free Press	31%	39	25
37076	15/5	N/A	Environics Poll	52%	26	17
18/5	24-25/5	Hamilton Spectator	Compass Poll	36%	40	21
29-31/5	36955	Angus Reid Southam News	Angus Reid	44%	34	20

*The first entry is a local poll concerning the London area

Table 1.2 shows the results of the 1990 and 1995 Ontario Provincial elections.

Table 1.2 Election outcomes in the 1990 and 1995 Ontario campaign

Election Results	1990			1995		
	Seats	Seat %	Vote %	Seats	Seat %	Vote %
Conservatives	20	15.4	23	82	63.1	45
Liberals	36	27.7	32	30	23.1	31
NDP	74	56.9	38	17	13.1	20
Independent	0	0	0	1	0.8	3
Other			7			
Total	130	100%	100%	130	100.1%	99.0%

This thesis will ask several questions related to polls: Did the number of stories about the leaders reflect their status as frontrunner or underdog? At the start of the campaign McLeod was the frontrunner while Harris was seen as the underdog; Bob Rae lagged far behind. Was the

number and placement of stories about McLeod and Harris altered after the change in the polls? Further, did the focus on the leadership change displace local coverage of the local campaign as the race heated up?

Levels of Campaign

Provincial elections operate on more than one level. There is an overall province-wide campaign, where campaign coverage tends to focus on party leaders who want to occupy the position of premier. However, there are also campaigns to elect local representatives for constituencies throughout Ontario. In fact, the balance of victories in local campaigns ultimately determines the outcome of the election for the premier, as Ontarians do not vote directly for the Premier.

Similarly, media coverage of the election also focuses at several levels: the leaders, their provincial parties, provincial issues, as well as local candidates and local issues. There appears to be a hierarchy of importance in election coverage. In federal and provincial elections the media tend to follow the leaders, rather than local candidates. Local candidates are likely to receive significant coverage only if the riding is highly contested, if the candidate has an independent status outside politics, or if he or she has (or is expected to have) an important role in politics.

There is often a spillover effect between levels of government. Federal, provincial and municipal elections are discrete events, held at separate times; however, the results of one election can affect another, and the events and activities at one level of government may affect other levels of government. Mike Harris was able to control the spillover effect between the two

levels of Canadian government to his advantage, as the low popularity of major Conservative figures like Mulroney did not appear to affect the election. However, the spillover effect did not work in the Liberal's favour, as McLeod did not profit from the popularity of the Liberal federal government under Chretien.

Focus of the Present Study

The present study examines the coverage of the 1995 Ontario Provincial election in a local media market using media available to Windsor voters. By examining the coverage of the Windsor Star and local, regional, and national newscasts on three TV networks (CBC, CTV and Global) the study analyses the election from the perspective of Windsorites. The Windsor Star and the local newscast of the CBC are identified as local media; CTV and Global do not have local outlets in Windsor, but focus more on provincial than local coverage, as is true for the CBC national and provincial newscasts.²

Coverage of the election will be examined to obtain answers to several questions about the local coverage of provincial election:

- Were voters exposed to what was going on at the local level in the election as much as the provincial level, or did provincial campaign coverage overshadow coverage of the local election?

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CHWI, the local affiliate of CHUM/CITY TV was not included in the study because its prime time broadcasts were not taped by the Soderlund et al. research project.

- Did the local media in this study, the Windsor Star and the local CBC newscasts, have more extensive coverage of the local contests than was found on the regional newscasts?
- Did the Windsor Star have more local coverage than local TV?
- Did the emphasis on election coverage in general and on local contests, in particular, increase as the election drew nearer?
- Overall, did leaders, parties, local candidates, or issues receive the greatest visibility over the course of the election in the media?
- Was the election coverage equally distributed across all parties and their candidates, or did some receive more prominent coverage?
- Did the amount of coverage vary according to the parties' standing in Parliament, or did it reflect their positions in the polls during the election campaign?
- Which issues were covered more and which were covered less at the local level?
- Were specific issues associated with specific parties or leaders, or were all parties associated with all issues?

Background in Brief: The 1995 Ontario Election

Prior to the 1985 election the Progressive Conservatives had held power in Ontario for 42 years, most recently under Bill Davis. However, they won only 20 seats in 1985 under the leadership of Frank Miller, and the Liberals under leader David Peterson formed a minority government with NDP support. In 1987, the Liberals were reelected with a large majority. Only

three years into his mandate Peterson called an early election in 1990 which caused a backlash from voters who thought Peterson called the election too early.

As a result, the NDP under Bob Rae came to power in 1990 in a surprising upset over the Liberals, gaining 74 seats. The Liberals had held 93 seats in the previous parliament, but were reduced to 36 seats in the 1990 election. Mike Harris, a relative unknown at the time, made a respectable showing for the PCs, earning 23% of the votes and 20 seats.

In 1990 the provincial NDP under Bob Rae had attracted many voters who were discontent with the Peterson Liberals; however, in 1995 voters were equally disenchanted with the NDP's "Agenda for the People" and especially the "Social Contract".

The 1995 Ontario provincial election was an interesting election. Ontario's first social democratic government had received widespread media attention. Premier Rae soon found out he could not please everyone. The early NDP agenda focussed on labour rights, equity legislation and social spending which enraged the Progressive Conservatives. The NDP's enactment of the Social Contract (in an attempt to control the deficit) made labour angry. Rae waited as long as he could constitutionally to call the election, as the polls were unfavourable for his re-election chances. According to the polls, the NDP never had a chance of winning reelection during the last year of its government. The party had antagonized its traditional supporters, especially those from the labour sector. From the outset of the campaign, the outcome of the Ontario election was seen as a forgone conclusion by the media. Two of the accepted assumptions were that the provincial Liberals under Lyn McLeod would sweep to power, based partly on the popularity of their federal Liberal counterpart, and that the 1995 provincial election would be Premier Bob

Rae's swan song in provincial politics. Both of these assumptions may have affected the media's coverage of the election, as did the realization of the possibility that, as the campaign wore on, the first assumption might not be correct. He had been the first candidate "out of the gate" once the 1995 election was called. Harris had distributed his policy booklet a year before the election, a booklet he had been working on since the previous election in 1990. However, Harris was not given a real chance of winning the polls changed in his favour, as McLeod was considered the clear frontrunner.

Campaigns are not static. They are a process, building and changing over time, evolving with each phase of the campaign. The number and prominence of election stories could be expected to increase as the 1995 provincial election day neared. With respect to the newspaper coverage, this would mean that a greater number of stories should appear above the crease than below, would be run on the front page, or be lead stories in the Windsor Star. For broadcasts, the number and length of the election stories should also increase as the election campaign neared its conclusions. Did the campaign stories' position change over time? And, if the election was not on the front page, what type of story displaced it?

Organization of the Thesis

The remainder of the thesis will be organized in three chapters with the following structure:

The method section details how content analysis was used to examine the coverage of the 1995 Ontario provincial election. It will also specify the time frame of the election stories, why specific media outlets were used, and describe the resulting data set.

In the data description chapter the campaign coverage will be broken down into four phases: the election start, ending with the beginning of TV advertising; the hot phase, ending with the change in the polls; the late campaign, ending with the election; and the day after the election. This will help track changes and trends over the election period in terms of the coverage of the leaders, parties, local candidates, and issues. The coverage of leaders, parties, local candidates, and issues will be compared across phases and by media.

The conclusion will examine whether the study revealed anything new. How well did the local media cover the election at the local level? Was there bias in the coverage of the 1995 provincial election? Did the coverage match the results of the 1995 provincial election? Finally, suggestions for further research will be offered.

Chapter 2: Methods

Introduction

The present study is designed to examine the media's coverage of the 1995 Ontario provincial election by conducting a content analysis of the local coverage in the Windsor Star and on three available TV networks: the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), CTV and the Global television network.

Content Analysis

Berelson (1952, p. 18) defined content analysis as “a research technique for the quantitative, objective, systematic description of the manifest content of communication.” In quantitative content analysis, the cases (stories) must be selected according to explicit and consistent rules. The coding must be systematic, meaning that all content will be treated exactly the same. The coding must be as objective or “inter-subjective” as possible to allow for replication. Content analysis can produce a better understanding of an event as well as of the media coverage of the event, but it cannot be used to assess media effects. To analyse media effects in the election campaign, one would have had to survey actual readers and viewers of media during an election.

My analysis will follow Berelson's definition by counting occurrences of certain categories of story characteristics: coverage of the leaders, their parties, and local candidates, the coverage of issues, as well by assessing media evaluations of leaders, local candidates, and the parties, both locally and provincially. We coded which issues and foci were mentioned in each

story as well as characteristics of the stories themselves. The analysis will show the distributions, relationships between categories, and trends over the course of the campaign.

Selection of Cases

In this study whole articles in the Windsor Star and individual stories in the newscasts of the three networks will be used as the units of analysis; they were selected for study if they dealt with the provincial election or some aspect of it.

The Windsor Star was the newspaper chosen to examine local newspaper coverage of the provincial election. The Windsor Star is the only daily local newspaper in Windsor. Other papers are on sale in Windsor, including the Toronto Star and the Globe and Mail, and they covered the provincial election as well, but not from a local Windsor perspective. Consequently, these papers were not included. The entire Windsor Star was examined for election-related articles, not just the front page or Section A. Boxes indicating election content in the paper were excluded from the analysis, as these items only listed articles in the Windsor Star or times and dates of upcoming events; they did not contain actual coverage of the provincial election.

The election was held on June 8th, 1995. The study includes all articles on the election that were printed in the Windsor Star from April 28th to June 9th, spanning a 42 day period (excluding Sundays, as the paper is only published from Monday to Saturday). There were no election-related articles on the day of the election call itself (April 28th, 1995). Articles were selected if they had anything to do with the election.

A total of 323 newspaper articles were analysed in this study, including 13 articles in April, 184 articles in May, and 126 articles in June, including the day after the election.

Television coverage of the local election was examined on prime-time local, provincial and national newscasts on three Canadian stations broadcasting to Windsor: CBC, CTV, and Global. The television newscasts were available for this study as other researchers were studying campaign ads during the 1995 provincial election and had taped six prime-time viewing hours per day (6:00 p.m. to midnight) during the campaign advertising period³. Campaign advertising began on May 17th, 1995 and continued through the day before the election. Since the ads started on May 17th, taping did not start until then. Therefore, there is a three week gap between the start of the newspaper coverage and the start of television coverage. Similarly, election advertising ceased, according to the law, the day before the election - hence, taping ended June 7th, two days before the end of the newspaper coverage. As a result, the election stories from the newspaper (Windsor Star) and TV news stories are not directly comparable.

In addition to 323 newspaper articles, a total of 353 TV stories were coded for this project. Counting the television election stories only from the beginning of the advertising period suggests that on a per-day basis, television coverage was heavier than newspaper coverage, especially since the ad start coincided with the election going into high gear. For example, coverage of polls began around May 5th, followed by the leaders' debate on television on May 18. On the other hand, a comparison of the total number of stories in the Windsor Star with the total

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Thanks to Dr. Stanley Cunningham, Dr. Walter Romanow, and Dr. Walter Soderlund for use of material from their research project.

for any one TV network suggests much more extensive newspaper than TV coverage, as the data collection period was longer for the newspaper. In many of the analyses the campaign will be broken down into smaller time periods to adjust for the unequal length of the observation periods for the two media, thus allowing us to make fair comparisons across media.

The taping specifications for the advertizing study called for continuous taping from 6 p.m. to midnight (primetime) for CBC, CTV and Global.⁴ Unfortunately, this timeslot excluded some of the local broadcasts of the local TV outlets. For example, the local early evening newscasts on CBC and Global were not captured on tape because they ended before 6:00 p.m. In contrast, CTV had two regional newscasts included in the taped period. Consequently, it may appear that CTV has more local coverage, or more coverage overall. Furthermore, since the two local newscasts at 5:30 p.m. on CBC and Global were excluded, stories from these newscasts that were repeated on the late newscasts could not be identified as duplicates for those networks.

Examining the number of stories carried by election phase, medium, or type of newscast allows us to gauge how much was covered and on what type of newscast. Local newscasts usually cover local concerns, regional newscasts branch out more and cover the province, while national newscasts cover the country as a whole, as well as international news. The taped prime time period included national newscasts (CBC at 10:00 p.m., CTV at 6:30 p.m., and Global at 11:00 p.m.), provincial newscasts (CBC, CTV, and Global all at 6:00 p.m.), the local Windsor Late News airing on CBC at 11:00 p.m., and regional CTV late news at 11:30. Six magazine

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Unfortunately, CHWI local newscasts were not taped.

features were eliminated from the analysis as they typically do not contain election coverage.

National Hockey League (NHL) playoffs and tape malfunctions account for some gaps in the television election data.⁵ The eleven o'clock newscast on Global is called “The World Tonight” and focuses on what is important locally, provincially, nationally, or internationally. This accounts for the large number of election stories at 11:00 p.m. on Global.

Table 2.1 TV Stories by source and time

TIME	CBC	CTV	Global	n	Total %
6:00	68(P)	66(P)	69(P)	203	57.5
6:30	-	2(N) a)	-	2	0.6
10:00	7(N)	-	-	7	2.0
11:00	34 (L)	4(N)	61(N)	99	28.0
11:30	-	42(P)	-	42	11.8
Total	109 = 30.8%	114 = 32.3%	130 = 36.8%	353	100

a) there was a newscast at 6:30, but there were only two stories pertaining to the election (May 28th and June 4th) (L)= local newscast, (P)= provincial newscast, (N)= national newscast.

- = no newscast at this time

Table 2.1 shows where and when the various election stories aired on TV. The majority of the stories were seen at 6:00 p.m. (203 stories or 57.5%), followed by the 11:00 p.m. newscasts with 99 stories (28.0%). A total of 42 stories (11.8%) aired at 11:30 p.m. Only 2 election stories aired at 6:30 p.m., and 7 stories aired at 10:00 p.m. on “The National” which

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Nine newscasts out of a total 162 could not be coded (CBC at 6:00 May 20, May 21 at 10:00, May 27 at 6 and 11:00, May 28 at 10:00 and 11:00, June 5 6:00 and 10:00, June 6 at 6:00)

clearly disregarded the Ontario election. CTV had the most time to devote to the coverage of the election, since they have an extra half hour newscast, however, Global carried the most election coverage.

As mentioned the campaign period was divided into four parts: April 29th to May 16th will be referred to in this study as the **early phase** of the election, prior to the campaign advertising; May 17th to 26th is referred to as the **hot phase**, as it contains the beginning of the advertising, the leaders' debate, and the change in the frontrunner (according to the polls). May 27th to June 8th is referred to as the **late phase**, and June 9th is the **day after** the election (see Table 2.2).

Table 2.2 Election stories by phase, medium, and network

Media (N of Days)		Early Phase (19)	Hot Phase (10)	Late Phase (12)	Day After (1)	Total (42)
Windsor Star		107	59	118	39	323
Avg Stories/Day		5.6	5.9	9.8	39	7.7
CBC	Local	a)	7	27	a)	34
	Regional	a)	28	40	a)	68
	National	a)	2	5	a)	7
	Avg Stories/Day	a)	3.7	6.1	a)	2.6
Total CBC		a)	37	72	a)	109
CTV	Regional	a)	54	54	a)	108
	National	a)	1	5	a)	6
	Avg Stories/Day	a)	5.6	5.1	a)	2.7
Total CTV		a)	55	59	a)	114
GLOBAL	Regional	a)	29	40	a)	69
	National	a)	21	40	a)	61
	Avg Stories/Day	a)	5.2	6.7	a)	3
Total Global		a)	50	80	a)	130
Total TV		a)	142	211	a)	353 b)

a) No TV coverage was examined for the Early Phase or the Day After, since they were not taped

b) Six magazines were excluded from the data resulting in 353 TV election stories

The data for this study includes a total of 676 stories (excluding 6 television magazine stories), 353 stories from television and 323 articles from the Windsor Star. Table 2.2 shows that as the election went on, the number of election stories carried by the TV networks and

newspapers increased. Global TV, in particular, increased its coverage of election stories as it tended to pull together all important stories of the day and air them on the National or World Tonight newscast. Also, election stories were often repeated in several newscasts because of the importance of the provincial election in Ontario.

Statistical Significance

The study included the entire population of election stories in the local Windsor media, that is, all election stories printed in the Windsor Star from April 28th to June 9th 1995 and all election stories carried on the CBC, CTV and Global stations network evening news available in Windsor from May 16th to June 7th 1995 as provided on tapes by Drs. Soderlund, Cunningham, and Romanow. Since the stories are not sampled, but rather constitute the population, statistical tests of significance are not strictly appropriate in this study. Rather statistical tests of significance are used, to determine whether any differences found in a sample are not just due to the chance of sampling, but are likely to reflect real population differences.

Coding and Intercoder Reliability

The design of the coding sheets had to account for the fact that we were analysing two different media. The coding system allowed for each article/story to contain multiple foci and topics. For the Windsor Star stories, 53 variables were coded. Each headline was recorded, with its story date. Column length (measured in centimetres), location in the paper and on the page, presence of visuals and other details of the story format were coded. In addition, the slant of the

coverage of the candidates as well as the parties they represented at both the local and provincial level was judged by the coders. (See Appendix A and B for the Windsor Star and TV code sheets).

For TV stories 61 variables were coded. Broadcast time was measured in seconds. Since television news lives by moving pictures, and both picture and sound “speak to the viewer,” (Brosius-Bernd, Donsbach, and Birk, 1996), the availability of location footage was recorded. The existence of promos and the line-up position of stories were noted to indicate the importance of the story.

All articles from the Windsor Star were coded twice.⁶ 26 newspaper articles were subjected to a formal intercoder reliability test; the 26 articles were a random selected sample of articles from all the articles coded by both coders. All other newspaper stories were examined for discrepancies between coders, and any discrepancies were subsequently resolved by the coders. The TV news stories were only coded once and therefore not checked for intercoder reliability.

Intercoder reliability assesses the degree to which coding results can be reproduced by two or more coders. If the coding instructions and categories are unambiguous, two coders coding the same material using the same instructions should end up with the same results, or at least there should be agreement in the vast majority of cases coded. The second coder was provided with the coding categories on which to judge each article. After consultation between

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Articles 94 and 168 were coded only once. They are letters to the editor that discussed two federal Conservatives, Joe Clark and Kim Campbell. They were later included in the present population to account for the spillover effect between different levels of government.

the two coders, several categories (graphic, graphic and text, cartoons, graphic and photo, and text) were added to the story style variable.

Disagreements over how stories were coded often reflected a difference in perception or in the way the original category definitions were interpreted. The more choices there are within a category, the greater the chance for divergence or disagreement among the coders. In addition, evaluation variables are more subjective than descriptions. Thus, one would expect less agreement on the variable “crowd response to the leader” as well as on the evaluations of the leaders, their parties, and the local candidates than on the focus (e.g. leader or party) (see Table 2.3 and Appendix C for the details and various sub-measures of inter-coder reliability).

The coders achieved complete agreement on three of the 26 articles subjected to intercoder reliability. Two of these articles merely provided information as opposed to focussing on issues; this would improve reliability as such articles require fewer decisions (one was “Politalk,” the other a letter to the editor of the Windsor Star).

In the present study, evaluation of crowd response, story characteristics and topics produced more agreement among the coders as the category choices were more straightforward, whereas the evaluation of the leaders, parties, and local candidates produced less agreement among the coders as these are subjective assessments.⁷ The evaluation of a particular candidate can be influenced by the slant of the article. Thus, the rating of a candidate is more subjective than recording whether a story is on the front page or at the top of the newscast; this accounts for

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In the case of the items evaluating crowd response the surprisingly high level of agreement is probably due to the fact that the articles have a clear slant which affects both readers and coders.

the differences in agreement levels. The overall intercoder reliability coefficient is acceptable at .81.

Table 2.3 Coder reliability (agreement level) by type of coding decision

Type of Coding	Agreement Level
Story Characteristics	0.83
Evaluation of Crowd Response	0.88
Positive/Negative Evaluation of Leaders	0.63
Topics	0.87
Overall Average	0.81

Agreement level is calculated as Reliability = $2M/(N1 + N2)$ (Holsti, 1969, cited in Wimmer and Dominick, 1994).

Duplication

Duplication of an election news story in the media means that a duplicate or close approximation of a story in the earlier edition of a TV newscast that was repeated in a later edition, or that a news story from one newspaper is substantially reprinted in another paper. However, TV news stories are rarely exact duplicates of earlier ones. Repeated stories may appear at a different line-up position in the newscast, visuals may be taken out, the stories may be edited down, or be reported by the anchor only, perhaps with the use of a still graphic or picture. In the present study, TV news story duplication is judged to exist if the title of the stories and the contents were identical or similar, and there was less than a 16 second difference between the running time of the duplicated stories.

The cost of the technology to cover any story, particularly for television, explains why repeated items are included on different newscasts. Re-running of stories happens in the media because newspapers and TV networks and stations have limited news budgets.

Duplication of news stories allows producers to get more mileage out of what is produced; they may not have the time, resources or money to produce a fresh story for the 11:00 p.m. newscast after running one story on the issue on the supper-time news.

Duplication also happens because of the nature of news coverage. All major stories, including election stories, flow into and within news organizations in a top-down manner: central news outlets like CBC in Toronto and CBC Newsworld let local CBC stations such as Windsor's CBET use their stories and visa versa. Politicians tend to leak or give access to stories to the bigger news organizations; in turn, those organizations pass the stories to their local outlets. Duplication of news stories also occurs during an election because local newscasts are often repeated during the evening. In addition, local and provincial newscasts are covering the same election, so stories produced at one level are relevant to the other, although provincial stories are probably more likely to be repeated locally than vice versa, unless the local story is especially relevant.

Duplication or repetition could also be found in newspapers if one compared several newspapers. For example, chain newspapers reprint articles published first in another paper belonging to the chain. The current study examines the coverage of the 1995 election only in one paper, so we cannot tell directly whether its stories are reprinted. The issue might be less crucial for papers, however, as readers who receive only one paper will not see other copies of these

stories. However, when a story in the Windsor Star was originally filed by a reporter for a different paper or was derived from a central chain source like Queen's Park Bureau, this was coded. It is likely that such stories are reprints, perhaps slightly edited or shortened versions of what originally or simultaneously appeared elsewhere; there were 140 such newspaper stories (or 43.3% of the 323 total stories coded from the Star).

Repetition of stories across newscasts is important because it allows the subjects, names, words, and phrases to become more familiar during the election. If viewers see a story just once they may not remember it, but seeing it twice helps the viewer take notice and improve recall of the issues or candidates. Viewing a story twice may also help the viewer remember key phrases or ideas of a particular candidate. Therefore, it is important to know how many stories about Harris, Rae, or McLeod were repeated over the course of the election coverage.

First, duplication of stories increases the number of viewers who see the material, assuming that viewers only watch one newscast. Second for repeat viewers, duplication means double exposure to the same story. From both perspectives repeated stories should be included in the analysis as they affect the "mix" of what the electorate could view.

On the other hand, if we wanted to examine election coverage from the producers' side, repeated airings of stories would have to be excluded, as they were only produced once.

If the duplicated stories were included in the analysis only once, i.e., if repetitions were removed from the analysis, we would take a production perspective on election stories. Since we are trying to analyse election coverage from the perspective of what the public had access to,

repeated stories need to be included with their repetitions because they increased the coverage of their respective subjects.

Based on available data, 104 out of 353 TV stories or (29.5 %) were repeated; duplicates appeared on local newscasts most often at 6:00 p.m. and 11:30 p.m.

CTV had less duplication in its coverage with 34 duplicated stories (29.8%) on their local and regional newscasts at 6:00 p.m. and 11:30 p.m. Global ran the most duplicated stories with 69 stories (53.1%) being duplicated. The CBC local broadcasts included only one duplicated story being aired twice, because the early local news fell outside of our taping time⁸ (see Table 2.4).

Table 2.4 Duplicate stories by network

Duplicated Stories	CBC	CTV	Global	Total
Identical copy	1	21	46	68
Basically the same, but shorter copy	0	6	12	18
Basically the same, but longer copy	0	7	11	18
Original stories	108	80	61	249
Total Stories	109	114	130	353
Unique stories %	99.1	70.9	47.3	70.5
Total of repeated stories %	0.9	29.8	53.1	29.5
% are within network				

⁸

The duplicated story aired on both the provincial and late local broadcasts on the CBC.

A comparison of the different election phases shows that in the hot phase 44 stories or 30.9% of a total of 142 stories were duplicates. Sixty stories out of 211 (28.4%) were duplicated during the late phase of the election.

Table 2.5 displays how many duplicates are mentioned in conjunction with a particular focus.

Duplicated stories most often focussed on the leaders (102 duplicate stories). Issue stories were repeated second most often (91 stories). Local stories are rarely duplicated; only two stories with a local focus (18.2% of the local stories) were duplicated over the course of the election. Stories featuring local candidates fared even worse, as fully 94.3% of the stories were broadcast only once.

Table 2.5 Duplication by focus

Focus	same	n	shorter	n	longer	n	no duplicates	n
Leader	20.9	66	5.7	18	5.7	18	67.8	214
Local	18.2	2	0	0	0	0	81.8	9
Local Candidate	2.9	1	2.8	1	0	0	94.3	33
Provincial Focus	7.4	2	0	0	3.7	1	88.9	24
Issue Focus	19.5	60	4.5	14	5.5	17	70.5	217

Table entries are row percentages, indicating the proportion out of all stories with the specific focus; stories can have multiple foci.

Variable Description

News stories can be emphasized or de-emphasized by different means. For the newspaper importance is indicated by the position on the page, whether a story was the lead story on the

front page or ran on the inside pages, as well as by the length of the story. I also recorded if there were graphics, such as a map pointing out the local ridings in the provincial election. The style of the story in the paper included whether the story had accompanying photos or not, or whether it was simply just a photo with no text other than identification. The type of the story was also recorded: did the story appear on the front page or on inside pages of the Windsor Star, or as an editorial usually written by staff. Feature columns were also included, both by regular columnists and items written by local community leaders or experts. Letters to the editor written by readers comment on some aspect of the election and its coverage. For the newspaper these factors were used to create an importance index (see Appendix D). For TV stories importance is indicated by line-up position, length, type of story (e.g., reporting by both the anchor and reporter, the reporter alone, or the anchor alone). The style of a story recorded whether there were visuals and whether the visuals came from on-location footage. I also recorded whether the story had a promo. Promos to a news story on TV are called “bumpers” at the beginning of newscasts and teasers before commercial breaks. News stories that are preceded by “teasers” tend to elicit more attention than stories that are not primed by a bumper or a teaser.⁹

Articles above the crease are seen as more important than those placed below. A total of 240 articles (74.3%), appeared above the crease. However, only 75 stories out of a possible 323 were lead stories. On many days election coverage was displaced by international events, like the threat of the ebola virus, or by local crime or human interests stories. The election was still

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According to Schleuder, White, and Cameron (1993), teasers alone or in combination with bumpers enhance a story and are effective tools in conveying critical information.

covered extensively by the Windsor Star (7.7 stories per day), but mostly in the inside pages. Of the inside election stories only 2.9% were lead stories on their page.

The line-up position of stories is important in both the Windsor Star and on TV newscasts, as important stories would presumably be printed in the front of the paper or run at or near the top of their newscasts. Leading items define the problems the public regards as most important. In the Windsor Star, only 27 stories (8.4%) ran on the front page. On television, slightly more election stories appeared in the top two positions (48 = 13.4%). 148 election stories (41.2%) appeared in the third to sixth position in the TV newscasts, leaving almost half of the election stories (45.4% or 163) in later positions in the newscasts.

The length of the Windsor Star stories was measured in column centimetres. Of the 323 newspaper election stories 125 were longer than 45 cm (38.7%), while 81 stories measured between 30 and 45 cm (24.1%). The remaining 119 (36.8%) stories were shorter than 30 column centimetres. Of the 353 TV stories, 109 stories (31.0%) were between 61 and 90 seconds in length, and another 92 TV stories (26.1%) were 91 seconds and longer; the remaining 149 stories (42.4%) were shorter than one minute.

Promos introduce a story before it airs to create curiosity and peak the viewers' interest. There were a total of 98 promos for 27.0% of the TV election stories. The CBC had 27 promos for 109 election stories (or 24.8%), CTV had 27 promos for 114 election stories (or 23.7%), and Global had the highest level of promos (41 for 129 election stories or 31.8%).

Of the newspaper stories 183 articles (56.7%) contained only text and another 107 stories (33.1%) contained a photo with the text for a total of 290 articles (89.8%) containing text. A total of 7.5% of the newspapers stories were editorials, and 5.7% were letters to the editor.

A hallmark of TV is that stories are accompanied by visuals. In the present study an overwhelming majority (335 or 94.9%) of TV election stories did have on-location visuals, meaning that the story was reported from its point of origin. A total of 163 (46.1%) election stories on TV (CBC, CTV, and Global) were reported by both anchor and reporter, showing the importance of covering an election. Ninety-five election stories (26.9%) were reported by the reporter only and 95 (26.9%) by the anchor only.

Of the 323 election stories in the Windsor Star, 183 (56.7%) were written by journalists working at the Windsor Star. Another 68 (21.1%) were written by writers working for other Southam papers and 72 election stories (22.3%) come from other sources, e.g. wire services¹⁰

Rating Election Stories by Importance

In order to compare the importance of election stories, an importance indicator was constructed which combined variables that indicated the importance attached to each article or news story by the respective editor or news director. Wherever possible similar indicators were chosen for both media. The importance of the Windsor Star stories was calculated as the mean of

¹⁰

Stories by Richard Brennan, head of the Queen's Park bureau during the 1995 election and an employee of the Windsor Star, were considered Windsor Star stories rather than originating from Queen's Park bureau. Brennan was Press Gallery president and columnist for the Windsor Star and Southam News.

six variables (each coded 0 = least important to 2 = most important): whether a story was a lead story, the position of an election story in regards to other election items, above or below the crease, length, whether it included a photo, and whether it appeared on the front page or as an editorial. The TV importance variable was calculated as the mean of five variables coded 0 to 2: the line-up position, whether a promo or teaser was run, length of a story, the presence of visuals, and whether it was presented by a reporter, anchor, or both (see Appendix D for a summary).

The average importance of the Windsor Star was .97. The average importance for all TV stories was slightly higher at 1.09, partly because of the last indicator: many TV stories received a rating of 2 as over the half the stories involved both anchor and reporter (see Table 2.6). The average importance of election stories in both media remained fairly consistent throughout the different phases of the election.

The low importance of the Windsor Star stories on the outcome of the election (“After”) reflects the fact that many of these simply reported the results of various races on the inside pages. However, later analysis will show that different issues and topics were covered with different degrees of emphasis in both media.

Table 2.6 Average importance of election stories for different media and election periods

Media	Overall	Early	Hot	Late	After
TV	1.09	N/A	1.09	1.1	N/A
Newspaper	0.97	1.02	1.02	0.94	0.85
Overall	1.04	N/A	1.06	1.04	0.85

Table 2.7 Election coverage by campaign phase (Windsor Star only)

Indicators of Importance	Early	Hot	Late	After	Total (%)	Total (n)
Placement						
Above Crease (% of Total)	79.4	76.3	71.2	66.7	74	250
Lead Story (% of Total)	25.2	22.0	22.9	20.5	23.2	75
Front Page	9.3	1.4	3.6	5.1	3.9	27
Inside Pages	68.2	17.9	18.1	71.8	29.3	198
Editorials	27.5	13.7	49.0	9.8	7.5	51
Letters to Editor	23.1	23.1	46.2	7.7	5.8	39
Cartoons	12.5	37.5	37.5	12.5	1.2	8
Length						
Avg Length of Articles in cm	36.5	52.9	63.8	64.1	52.8	323
Short (under 30 cm) %	45.8	30.5	28.0	38.5	35.6	115
Medium (30 to 45 cm) %	28.0	25.4	25.4	15.4	25.1	81
Long (over 45 cm) %	26.2	44.1	46.6	46.2	39.3	127

The majority of newspaper stories were printed above the crease, with 74% of the stories appearing there, while 26% are below the crease (Table 2.7). There is a tendency for newspapers to place more ads below the crease. One would expect election stories to appear above the crease because of the importance of elections. In fact, an examination of five different editorial pages in The Windsor Star revealed that during the election there was no advertizing on the editorial pages at all that would have competed with editorial content.

Bacha, Kaid, and Johnston (1994) found that leading items (as well as topics that appear frequently) become the problems voters regard as the nation's most important. There is at least one lead story per day on the election, except on day 20. However, non-lead articles far outweigh the lead election articles (77% to 23%). Most of the lead stories (84.0%) about the election appear at the top of the inside pages in the Windsor Star and another 8% of the lead stories were lead stories on the front page of the paper; the remaining 8% are on the editorial pages.

The majority of election stories were located on the inside pages of the Windsor Star during all phases of the campaign. The proportion of election stories on the front page went down as the election progressed and picked up a little the day after the election as the winners were featured on the front page of the paper.

Russomanno and Everett (1995) suggested that length provides a useful quantifiable standard of importance. As Table 2.7, indicates the average length of newspaper election items increased steadily over the election.

In the electronic media election stories become slightly more prominent as the campaign wore on (Table 2.8). Stories moved up in the line-up, from 7.1 to 6.5, the percentage of election stories with promotion increased very slightly, and the percentage of stories covered only by the anchor declined from the hot to the late phase. The percentage of medium length election stories increased during the campaign, and the average length of TV stories increased from the hot to the late phase of the campaign.

Table 2.8 Election coverage by campaign phase (TV news only)

		Hot %	Late %	n
Length of Stories	Short 0 s to 60 s	35.9	27.5	109
	Medium 61 s to 90 s	21.1	33.2	100
	Long 91 s and up	43.0	39.3	144
	Average Length (seconds)	85.7	104	353
Line-up Position	Average Position	7.1	6.5	353
Type	Anchor Only	28.9	56.8	95
	Anchor and Reporter	51.4	42.1	163
	Reporter Only	19.7	31.7	95
Promo	Stories with Promo (%)	25.5	28.0	95
Total n		142	211	353

Summary

The data collected in the present study allowed us to explore the nature of local coverage of the provincial election concerning Windsor. The data for the Windsor Star was collected over 42 days with 323 election stories, or an average of 7.7 election stories per day appearing in the paper. The TV election coverage used in this study spanned 22 days with 353 election stories, an average of 16 stories per day over the course of the election on three network newscasts.

The average number of election stories increased as the election progressed from 5.6 stories in the early phase to 9.8 in the late phase of the election. The average number of election stories also increased on the TV newscasts with CBC and Global increasing their average

number of stories while CTV maintained their average number of election stories in both phases.

The average number of stories carried by CBC, CTV and Global was almost identical, but the importance of the election stories increased slightly.

Chapter 3 will examine the coverage more closely to determine how various media covered local contests.

Chapter 3: Data Analysis

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the data analysis of the coverage of the 1995 Ontario Provincial election. The analysis will focus on local coverage in the Windsor Star and on the three network TV stations available in Windsor. In examining the election we will look for similarities and differences among media in their coverage. The primary focus in this study is local coverage of the election, we must also consider the interaction between the local campaign and its coverage on the one hand, and the provincial campaign and its coverage on the other, as well the processes and practices of the media involved in this study.

Questions Examined

- Were voters exposed to what was going on at the local level in the election as much as they were to the provincial level, or did provincial campaign coverage overshadow coverage of the local election?
- Does the answer to the previous question differ for different types of media, or for locally versus provincially based media?
- Was there change in the extent of local coverage over the course of the campaign?
- Overall, did leaders, parties, local candidates, or issues receive the greatest visibility in the media over the course of the election?
- Which of these foci received the most coverage at the local level?

- Was the election coverage equally distributed across all parties, and candidates, or did some receive more prominent coverage? Did this differ for local and provincial coverage?
- Did the amount of coverage vary according to the parties' standing in Parliament, or did it reflect their positions in the polls during the election campaign?
- Which issues were covered at the local level?
- Were specific issues associated with specific parties or leaders, or were all parties associated with all issues? And how were the party platforms covered?

What Can We Expect From The Coverage?

It is often stated that campaign planning and media coverage in elections have become increasingly centralized. If this is the case, how do different media cover different aspects of provincial campaigns? Specifically, in the 1995 provincial election, did provincial newscasts cover the leaders and the campaign at the provincial level, while the local media (the Windsor Star and the CBC's local newscast) cover local campaigns to a greater extent?

Are voters exposed in the media to what is going on at the local level in an election as much as they are to the wider provincial campaign? In provincial elections, the amount of media coverage a local candidate receives may depend on how competitive the riding is, whether there is a high profile candidate, and whether there is a local media outlet. In Windsor, the ridings tend to be closely contested by the Liberals and the NDP. There is a local paper, the Windsor Star. On TV, the CBC has a full local newscast. In addition, CHWI has a largely local newscast, but it was not available for analysis for this study. For the local aspects of the election one would expect to

find that the local media in this study, the Windsor Star and the local CBC newscast, would have more extensive coverage of the local contests than the regional newscasts, based simply on proximity of the local media to the local contests. In addition, one might expect that most stories with a local focus should receive high profile coverage, i.e., be above the crease or fold of a newspaper, or in the early part of the TV news line-up.

However, since both the Windsor Star and the local CBC stations are parts of larger non-local news operations, one can also expect many non-local stories in both local media, as they use the news connections and production output of their parent organizations.

In addition, given the centralized character of campaigns, it is possible that, overall, local coverage is going to be less visible than provincial coverage of the election. Since it is the provincial level of the election that is important for determining the Premier, one could expect extensive coverage of the campaign from all media. Media, especially television, tend to be narrowly focussed on the leaders, leading to centralized coverage of only a limited range of issues, according to Courtney (1981) and Patterson (1994).

Levels of Election Coverage

Stories were coded according to the level in the campaign at which election coverage occurred. Exclusively local (“local-only”) election stories refer to those that focus only on the local side of the election, such as local candidate races or issues particular to Windsor and surrounding area. Some examples of “local-only” election stories include a column asking Windsor voters about their opinion on an election issue, descriptions of local ridings, outlining

who is running for what party, and more detailed election articles such as “Rebel ousts McCurdy” and “Cooke stands by local NDP record” or “Windsor ridings too close to call”.

Many election stories have more than one focus; they include both local and provincial aspects of the election. They report on the leaders, issues, and the provincial side of the election as well as on the local election (labeled “both” in the tables). Stories with both a local and non-local angle include an article “Rae on the defensive” which mentions Rae as the leader, the provincial election and a local candidate. Similarly, the article “Liberals, NDP face uphill battles” has provincial leader as well as local candidate foci. Other election stories with local and non-local elements include “NDP lion tamer meets boss” (Arlene Rosseau meeting her leader, Bob Rae, after defeating fellow local candidate Howard McCurdy) and “Candidates agree cuts here to stay” (coverage of a debate on the local Windsor cable station involving local candidates discussing provincial budget cuts).

Finally, non-local stories focus exclusively on the provincial side of the election (labeled “non-local only”). Election stories with only non-local elements include “McLeod’s policy signals move to the right,” “Tories plan to get welfare moms working,” and “Rae assails grit policy book.” These three stories mentioned provincial leaders and issues, but no local aspects.

Table 3.1 outlines the level of coverage in the media. Out of a total 676 election stories, only 42 (or 6.2%) focussed exclusively on local elements. Another 151 stories (22.3%) had both local and non-local content. Combined, 28.5% (or fewer than one third) of the stories included at least some local content. Conversely, 94.2% of all items in this study included some non-local content, and the majority of stories reported were exclusively non-local stories (71.4%) or 483.

Overall the Windsor Star carried more local stories than appeared on TV, but both media carried more stories combining local and non-local content than stories with local content alone. In the Windsor Star, 45.9% of the election stories reported in 1995 had some local component, compared to only 12.4% of the election stories airing on TV. On the other hand, 88.6% of the newspaper's election stories did not have exclusively local content. On the TV newscasts, fully 98.6% of the stories contained at least some non-local election content.

Table 3.1 Local and non-local coverage

Media	Local only	Both Non-Local and Local	Non-Local Only	Any Local Content	Total %
NP	11.5%	34.4	54.2	45.9	100
TV	1.1%	11.3	87.3	12.4	100
Overall	6.2%	22.3	71.4	28.5	100
Overall n	42	151	483	193	676

Table entries are row percentages: 11.5% of the paper coverage was exclusively local election content

Thus, election stories with a local focus paled in comparison to non-local election stories; in both media non-local coverage of the provincial election predominates. Exclusively local coverage of the election in Windsor was dismal on TV, and while the picture brightens when one includes election stories containing both local and non-local angles, the coverage was heavily skewed toward non-local election stories that involve the leaders and provincial issues. Even the local paper emphasized the non-local aspects of the provincial election.

In order to examine whether local coverage changed over the campaign, Table 3.2 shows the level of coverage for different phases of the campaign. The 1995 provincial election campaign was divided into four phases: the early phase, from the election call on April 28th to May 16th; the hot phase, which included the leadership debate, May 17th to the 26th; the late phase May 27th to June 7th (the day before the election); and the day after the election, June 9th. For the Windsor Star, we coded stories from all four phases. For TV only the hot and late phases are included since the other data was not available (see Chapter 2).

Table 3.2 Level of coverage by media and period

Media	Focus	Early	Hot	Late	Day After	Overall
NP	Local Only	9.3	10.2	11.0	20.5	11.5
	Both	34.6	32.2	30.5	48.7	34.4
	Non-Local Only	56.1	57.6	58.5	30.8	54.2
TV	Local Only	N/A	0.7	1.4	NA	1.1
	Both	N/A	9.9	12.3	NA	11.3
	Non-Local Only	N/A	89.4	86.3	NA	87.3

Table entries are column percentages, organized separately for newspaper and TV: of the early coverage in the paper, 9.3% is exclusively local.

The patterns for local and non-local coverage described above hold for all phases for both TV and newspaper. If we combine all the election stories that include a local focus, the percentage of local content in the Windsor Star was around 46%, except on the day after the election when it jumped to 69.2%, as the Windsor Star reported detailed local riding results.

Exclusively local election stories made up a small percentage of the total election stories covered in both media. Both newspaper and television tended to cover non-local election stories centred around the provincial campaign, the leaders, and the issues.

Table 3.3 and most following tables distinguish between the local (CBC) newscast and the remaining TV coverage, allowing us to compare local TV to local newspaper coverage on the one hand, and local to non-local TV on the other.

All forms of media in this study featured a majority of exclusively non-local election content throughout the entire campaign period, but not to the same extent. Overall, the provincial TV stations carried 89.0% entirely non-local election coverage followed by the local Windsor CBC station with 70.6%. The Windsor Star, on the other hand, had the least amount of non-local coverage with 54.2%. The Windsor Star covered the local election exclusively in almost 12% of its stories, compared to 3% on the local TV news and 0.9% on provincial TV. Counting the stories with both local and non-local coverage, almost half of the Windsor Star stories had local content, compared to less than a third of the local TV news (29.4%), and only 11.0% of the provincial newscasts.

Table 3.3 Level of coverage, by media level and period

Media	Level	Early	Hot	Late	Day After	Total
Windsor Star	Only Local	9.3	10.2	11.0	20.5	11.5
	Both	34.6	32.2	30.5	48.7	34.4
	Non-Local	56.1	57.3	58.5	30.8	54.2
CBC Local	Only Local	N/A	0	3.7	N/A	2.9
	Both	N/A	28.6	25.9	N/A	26.5
	Non-Local	N/A	71.4	70.4	N/A	70.6
Provincial TV	Only Local	N/A	0.7	1.6	N/A	0.9
	Both	N/A	8.9	10.3	N/A	9.7
	Non-Local	N/A	90.4	88.0	N/A	89.3

Table entries are column percentages: in the early phase of the campaign, 9.3% of election stories in the paper were exclusively local.

Prominence of Coverage

The importance of coverage can be gauged by the number of stories and by their size, placement, and treatment. The length of stories, where they appear relative to other stories (in the number one position, above the crease, or early in the newscast), and the inclusion of a photo in the paper or a promo on TV are all indicators of importance. Each of these indicators was examined for the three levels of coverage (see Table 3.4).

Table 3.4 Importance of local and non-local coverage, by media

Windsor Star	Average Length	% Front Page	% Above Crease	% With Photo
Local	50.6 cm	3.3	60.0	30.0
Both	67.3 cm	13.5	77.5	33.7
Non-Local	43.8 cm	7.5	77.6	33.9
Total	52.8 cm	8.4	74.3	33.1
Local TV	Average Length	% of #1	Average Line-up	% With Promo
Local	88.0 sec	6.0	5.0	0
Both	97.8 sec	15.0	4.8	11.1
Non-Local	79.8 sec	6.7	6.3	12.5
Total	84.8 sec	8.2	5.8	11.8
Non-Local TV				
Local	83.2 sec	0	25.6	0
Both	130.6 sec	0	10.0	25.8
Non-Local	94.6 sec	5.6	6.3	29.3
Total	98.0 sec	5.0	6.9	28.6

The percentage of election stories on the front page of the Windsor Star was low at 8.4%. Often they were displaced by coverage of other local events (especially crime and sports) and high profile stories such as the Bernardo case. Similarly, on TV the average line-up position of election stories overall was late in both local ($\bar{x} = 5.8$) and provincial ($\bar{x} = 6.9$) newscasts.

On average, local stories were longer than exclusively non-local stories. In the Windsor Star, stories with any local content were clearly longer than non-local stories. On TV, news

stories with both local and non-local elements were longer than either exclusively local or exclusively non-local items, both on the local CBC newscast and on provincial and national newscasts. However, local election stories were less likely to appear on the front page of the paper (3.3%), compared to election stories with both local and non-local election elements (13.5%) and exclusively non-local stories (7.5%). On the local TV newscast, election stories covering both local and non-local aspects were most likely to appear at the top of the newscast (15.0%), followed by non-local election stories (6.7%) and local stories (6.0%). Overall, local media “featured” about 8% of election stories (on the front page or at the top of the news), while non-local newscasts “featured” so only 5% of the election stories, none of which focussed wholly or even in part on the local election.

All three levels of election stories were positioned above the crease a majority of the time, but local stories marginally less than others. The average line-up position of local stories was much better on the local CBC than for non-local television news outlets ($\bar{x} = 5.0$ v. $\bar{x} = 25.6$). Similarly, local stories never received promos earlier in the show. Stories with non-local content were promoted more often, especially on provincial newscasts.

The various importance measures (factors) from Table 3.4 were summarized using a constructed “importance indicator” (refer to Chapter 2 for details).

Table 3.5 reports the importance of election stories separately for the three media and for different election levels. Overall, stories with both local and non-local elements are again the most important stories in both the print and electronic media. While the importance levels for

newspapers and television cannot be compared directly, local and provincial newscasts are quite similar in how much emphasis is placed on different election levels.

Table 3.5 Average importance of election level coverage by the media

Media	Local	Both	Non-Local	Total	n
NP (Local)	0.82	1.02	0.97	0.97	323
TV (Local)	1.00	1.20	1.11	1.13	34
TV (Non-Local)	0.75	1.22	1.08	1.09	318

Importance indicator varies from 0 - 2; higher values indicate higher importance. (See Chapter 2)

Generally, non-local coverage is more important than purely local coverage, except for the provincial newscasts where a very few local Windsor stories were prominently featured. The CTV television network covered local candidates from Windsor and the surrounding areas (which would count as exclusively local stories), such as stories dealing with the ridings of Chatham-Kent or Sarnia.

Table 3.6 Average importance of election coverage by level and period (newspaper only)

Level	Early	n	Hot	n	Late	n	Day After	n	Total
Local Only	1.07	15	0.81	8	0.74	18	0.77	19	35
Both	1.04	32	1.07	17	1.08	31	1.00	9	113
Non-Local	1.01	60	1.04	34	0.93	69	0.88	11	175
Total	1.02	107	1.02	59	0.94	118	0.85	39	323

Table entries are average importance scores (refer to Chapter 2)

Table 3.6 shows how the average importance varied in the Windsor Star throughout the four phases of the campaign. Exclusively local stories started out at a high point in the early period, but declined as the provincial campaign and leaders became more important. Non-local coverage also declined in importance late in the campaign. The importance of election stories involving both local and non-local elements was fairly steady at a relatively high level throughout the campaign.

On TV the average importance of election stories (not shown in tabular form) increased from the hot to the late phase for both local and non-local stories and decreased for stories with combined local and non-local election elements. There were fewer election stories with both local and non-local elements, but they had a higher overall average importance than non-local ones.

The Foci of Election Coverage

What factors received the greatest visibility or coverage over the course of the 1995 provincial election: leaders, parties, candidates, or issues? Due to the concentration of chain ownership of newspapers, many Canadian dailies are controlled from Montreal or Toronto. Chain ownership can bring shared resources. It can also bring homogenization of coverage and insensitivity to local concerns (Patterson 1994, Soderlund et al. 1984, Whittingham and Williams 1984). In addition, the party leaders' tours are tailored for television, leading to further centralization. Influenced by television, the campaigns tend to focus on party leaders, down-playing both local candidates and issues which require more specialized attention. Therefore one

would expect the focus on leaders to be higher on TV than in the newspaper, and the coverage of the leaders to overshadow all other coverage, especially in non-local stories.

Table 3.7 shows how leaders, parties (local and provincial parties), local candidates, and issues fared at each coverage level.

Table 3.7 Foci of election coverage, by media and election level

Media	Local Candidates	Parties	Leaders	Issues	n
Windsor Star					
Only Local	83.8	5.4	0	5.4	35
Both	55.9	42.3	24.3	58.6	113
Non-Local	0	24.6	53.7	69.7	175
Total %	28.8	28.5	37.5	58.5	323
TV CBC					
Only Local	100.0	0	0	0	1
Both	55.6	55.6	33.3	88.9	9
Non-Local	0	20.8	91.7	91.7	24
Total %	17.6	29.4	73.5	88.2	34
TV Non-Local					
Only Local	75.0	25.0	0	25.0	3
Both	83.9	38.7	64.5	80.6	31
Non-Local	0	29.2	95.4	88.7	285
Total %	9.1	30.1	91.2	87.1	319
Overall %	18.9	43.6	64.6	73.5	676

Table entries are cell percentages: 83.8% of the exclusively local stories in the Windsor Star cover local candidates.

Surprisingly, issues received by far the most coverage in the 1995 provincial election, featured in 73.5% of all election stories, followed by coverage of the party leaders (64.6%). Parties were covered in 43.6%, of stories, or at little more than half the level of issue coverage. Least covered were local candidates, who were the subject of only 18.9% of all election stories.

The coverage for parties (local and provincial) shows that overall they received 21% less coverage than the leaders, but a lot more than local candidates. This is not surprising since the leaders tend to be identified with the party to which they belong. Parties were covered most in non-local election coverage and least in local stories, in all media.

Stories with an issue focus received the most coverage during the election almost regardless of the type of media. Issues received the greatest coverage in non-local stories, as issues usually were linked with the leaders and their parties. And they received the most coverage on the non-local TV newscasts followed by the local CBC and then the Windsor Star. At the exclusively local level in the media issues were covered less. In the paper issues were covered a bit more when stories contained both local and non-local items. Only on non-local TV did leaders narrowly edge out issues.

In the relatively few purely local stories (38 of 676 overall), local candidates received the most coverage followed by parties. The newspaper led in the coverage of local candidates, with 28.8% of stories, followed by the local CBC (17.6%) and non-local TV (9.1%). In the paper, in non-local election stories issues were the main focus with 69.7%, and leaders (53.7%) were covered the most. On non-local TV, local candidates were pushed to the bottom of the list. On TV (both the local CBC and non-local TV) local candidates are given prominence in exclusively

local coverage, but there are very few stories of this type (4 of 397). While non-local TV carried only a tiny percentage of non-local stories, many of these focussed on local candidates. The paper as well as TV covered local candidates most often in purely local stories. Parties on the other hand, are covered most often in election stories with both local and non-local aspects and are more likely covered in stories with some non-local election content.

In the Windsor Star in local stories local candidates are covered more than any other topic. However, in all the media in this study at the non-local level, issue and leader related stories predominate, followed by parties. The leaders received less coverage in the paper than on TV. Non-local coverage predominates even in the paper.

Partisan Coverage

To find out which parties received the greatest coverage, Table 3.8 shows the partisanship of the coverage of local candidates, leaders, and provincial parties. The data show that there is not much difference among the parties' coverages.

Table 3.8 Partisan coverage of candidates, parties and leaders, by level and media

Media	Local Candidate			Parties			Leaders			n
	PC	LIB	NDP	PC	LIB	NDP	PC	LIB	NDP	
Windsor Star										
Only Local	3.2	3.2	6.5	2.7	2.7	5.4	0	0	0	35
Both	37.1	25.8	41.9	36.9	27	42.3	44.1	27.9	25.2	113
Non-Local	0	0	0	29.1	29.7	24.6	46.0	46.0	40.6	175
Total %	25.8	18.3	30.1	28.8	25.7	28.5	39.9	34.4	30.7	323
TV CBC										
Only Local	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Both	60.0	40.0	80.0	44.4	22.2	55.6	33.3	0	33.3	9
Non-Local	0	0	0	33.3	33.3	20.8	62.5	62.5	45.8	24
Total %	50.0	33.3	66.7	35.3	29.4	29.4	52.9	44.1	41.2	34
TV (Non-Local)										
Only Local	33.3	33.3	33.3	25.0	33.3	33.3	0	0	0	3
Both	34.6	26.9	60.0	32.3	22.6	38.7	51.6	41.9	51.6	31
Non-Local	0	0	0	36.5	34.7	29.1	59.6	55.8	50.5	285
Total %	34.5	27.6	41.4	36.1	33.5	30.1	58.3	53.9	50.2	319
Overall %	28.9	21.1	34.4	32.5	29.6	29.3	49.3	44.1	40.1	676

Table entries are cell percentages: of the Windsor Star stories with exclusively local election content, 3.2% cover local PC candidates.

For party leaders, the greatest election coverage was found in the non-local articles. By definition, stories covering leaders are not purely local stories. Coverage of the leaders was quite even across the other two levels of coverage in both newspaper and TV.

Harris was covered the most at each level, followed closely by McLeod and Rae; this same pattern emerged in all media in this study. In the paper, Harris received much greater coverage in election stories with both local and non-local elements than did the other two leaders. Harris and McLeod tied for the lead in non-local coverage, with Rae not far behind.

On the local CBC and on the provincial newscasts the percentage of non-local stories for the leaders followed a similar pattern to the overall coverage of the leaders in that Harris receives the greatest non-local coverage followed by McLeod and Rae.

In the Windsor Star, party coverage differed little with 28.8% for the PC's and for the NDP 28.5% and 25.7% for the Liberals. In all media, coverage of the parties followed the pattern of the leaders, with the PC party getting the most coverage (32.5%) followed closely by the Liberals (29.6%) and NDP (29.3%). The PC party also received the most coverage overall on local TV and on non-local TV.

In all three media (newspaper, local, and non-local TV) the NDP received more coverage in the combined local/non-local stories, and the Liberals were covered the least. However, since the Liberals did well at the non-local level, they pulled even with the NDP overall.

Overall, local NDP candidates received the most coverage with 34.4%, followed by the local PC (28.9%) and Liberal candidates (21.1%).

In the Windsor Star coverage of the local candidates followed voting patterns in Windsor to some extent, as the local NDP was strong both at the polls and in the coverage. However, the local PC candidates with 25.8% received more coverage than the Liberals (18.3%), reversing the local election results. The possibility that the Conservatives might win this election no doubt

helped the coverage of local PC candidates, as one might have expected less coverage, since the PC's rarely win any seats in this area.

On the local CBC station, the local NDP candidates had the most coverage (66.7%), followed by the PC's with 50.0% and the local Liberal candidates (33.3%). The local CBC did follow the voting patterns of this region with their overall coverage of NDP candidates, but local PC candidates again benefitted from the overall trend in the campaign.

The Importance of Polls

Poll changes affect all types of coverage as polls operate as a barometer for what is going on in the election. Polls can also direct coverage. They mostly affect provincial coverage, but can also affect local coverage of candidates. Polls prime who and what gets covered during an election. Polls are part of, and feed into, the preoccupation with the "horserace" elements of an election.

Election polls provide information about voter preferences, attitudes, behaviours, and beliefs during a campaign. Polls can provide feedback about the campaign and help candidates know how they are being received by the voters. In turn, for the media, polls are potentially important reporting tools and may direct election coverage. Especially changes in the poll standings can lead to a "bandwagon" effect (electors flocking to the candidate leading in the polls) or the opposite "underdog" effect (rallying in support of candidates trailing in the polls).

The literature on polls indicates that polls change more than might be expected during elections. Starting as the frontrunner in an election does not necessarily guarantee victory.

Johnston et al. (1992) note that in Canadian elections there is a history of frontrunners who lose campaigns. Of fourteen campaigns from 1945 to 1984, eight exhibited shifts, all against the initial campaign frontrunner. In 1957, 1962, and 1984 a pre-campaign majority turned into an outright loss. Clearly, voting intentions at the beginning of an election campaign are not the same as the vote itself.

During the 1995 campaign polls consistently showed that Premier Rae was not going to be re-elected. The initial frontrunner was the Liberal McLeod. Increasingly, the polls also suggested that the early favourite, McLeod, was in serious trouble with voters, and that Harris had a realistic chance of winning. In the second half of May the lead in the published polls changed from McLeod to Harris. Did the poll change affect the coverage of the leaders and their parties?

Table 3.9 Partisan coverage of leaders, by media and election level (pre/post poll change)

Media	Harris			McLeod			Rae		
	Total	Pre	Post	Total	Pre	Post	Total	Pre	Post
Windsor Star									
Only Local	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Both	44.1	45.0	41.0	27.9	33.3	24.1	25.2	30.0	24.0
Non-Local	45.7	45.0	48.0	45.7	52.6	42.9	40.6	43.0	43.0
Total %	39.9	41.0	40.0	34.4	41.0	32.4	30.7	35.0	32.0
TV CBC									
Only Local	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Both	33.3	0	43.0	0	0	0	33.3	50.0	29.0
Non-Local	62.5	60.0	63.0	62.5	80.0	57.9	45.8	60.0	42.0
Total %	52.9	43.0	56.0	44.1	57.1	40.7	41.2	57.0	37.0
TV (Non-Local)									
Only Local	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Both	51.6	33.0	63.0	46.4	16.7	57.9	51.6	42.0	58.0
Non-Local	59.6	54.0	65.0	55.8	62.6	49.3	50.5	53.0	48.0
Total %	58.3	52.0	64.0	53.9	58.6	49.7	50.2	52.0	49.0
Overall %	49.3	46.0	49.0	44.1	55.0	43.0	40.1	52.0	46.0

Table entries are cell percentages: 44.1% of combined stories prior to the poll change covered Harris compared to 40.0% after the poll change. The day of and the day after the election (coded only in the paper) were included in the analysis only in the "total" figures; they contain less leader coverage.

Table 3.9 compares the coverage of the three party leaders before ("Pre") and after ("Post") the poll change. Overall, Harris' climb in the polls is matched by somewhat increased coverage; in contrast, the coverage for both McLeod and Rae declined after the lead in the polls

changed. This trend was most obvious in the local CBC news stories: McLeod and Rae lost 16.4% and 20.1% in coverage, respectively, while Harris gained 12.7%. In the Windsor Star all candidates declined; however, Harris' coverage dropped only by 1%, while his opponents declined more, by 2.3% (Rae) and 8.6% (McLeod).

In addition to being covered less, Liberal leader Lynn McLeod was also referred to more negatively in the newspaper coverage (by a ratio of one positive to four negative references) than Rae (one to two), while Harris had a slight positive balance according to an unpublished study by York student Carmen Pignataro (as reported by Fletcher and Sottile, 1997).

The status of a candidate (leader, incumbent, or challenger) influences coverage patterns: even though Bob Rae was a distant third in the polls, he received considerable coverage as the incumbent. However, after the change in the polls media attention increasingly focussed on the new leader in the polls and likely winner of the election, Mike Harris.

Table 3.10 Provincial parties election coverage by media and election level

Media	PC			LIB			NDP			
Windsor Star	Total	Pre	Post	Total	Pre	Post	Total	Pre	Post	n
Only Local	2.7	6.3	0	2.7	6.3	0	5.4	6.3	7.7	35
Both	37.2	20.0	51.7	27.4	20.0	34.5	42.3	32.0	55	113
Non-Local	29.1	19.6	38.1	29.7	26.8	36.5	24.6	19.0	32	175
Total%	28.8	18.5	37.1	25.7	22.5	31.4	28.5	22.0	35.0	323
TV CBC										
Only Local	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Both	44.4	100.0	28.6	22.2	100.0	0	55.6	50.0	57.0	9
Non-Local	33.3	20.0	36.8	33.3	20.0	36.8	20.8	0	26.0	24
Total %	35.3	42.9	33.3	29.4	42.9	25.9	29.4	14.0	33.0	34
TV (Non-Local)										
Only Local	33.3	0	33.3	33.3	0	50.0	33.3	0	50.0	3
Both	32.3	25.0	36.8	17.2	25.0	21.1	38.7	42.0	37.0	31
Non-Local	36.5	26.6	46.2	34.7	37.4	32.2	29.1	31.0	27.0	285
Total %	36.1	26.3	44.9	33.5	36.2	31.1	30.1	32.0	29.0	319
Overall%	32.6	22.6	41.1	29.6	29.2	30.8	29.3	26.0	31.0	676

Table entries are cell percentages: at the exclusively local level in the paper 6.3% of the stories covered the provincial PC's before the poll change.

Table 3.10 shows the coverage of the parties in the different media, focusing on how the parties were covered in the media before and after the change in the polls. Overall, the parties' coverages did not exactly follow those of the leaders. First, the parties generally received less coverage than their leaders in all media both before and after the poll change. Second, Harris and

the PC party were covered more extensively than other leaders and their parties. Third, the effect of the poll change was different for the coverage of the parties than of the leaders.

Overall, the PC's coverage increased substantially after the poll change, from 22.6% to 41.1%; the 18.5% increase in coverage mirrored the party's increase in the polls. On the other hand, the Liberals and NDP did not lose coverage, even though they slipped in the polls. Coverage overall for the Liberals and NDP changed little from before to after the poll change. In fact, both parties increased slightly, due to significant jumps in coverage by the Windsor Star.

The pattern of coverage in the provincial and local media generally matched the overall pattern of party coverage, with a few exceptions. The PC party netted increased coverage in all three media, while the NDP received greater coverage in the local Windsor media (the Windsor Star and CBC). As the former front-runners, the Liberals lost coverage on TV both locally and provincially after the poll change, but not in the Windsor Star.

On non-local TV, the coverage of the leaders and provincial parties followed similar patterns. Coverage for both Harris and his party increased post-poll change, while the coverage of both the other two leaders and their parties decreased after the poll change.

The poll change in favour of Harris saw both his and his party's share of the coverage increase, whereas as the other two leaders' numbers went down, but their parties' coverage increased. In the Windsor Star the coverage generally matched this pattern. On the local CBC Harris' coverage went up after the poll change, whereas his party's coverage fell. The coverage of both McLeod and the Liberals decreased after the change, and Rae's coverage fell while the NDP's increased.

Issue Coverage

Weaver (1994) cited a 1978 paper by Weaver and McCombs reporting that voters who are most interested, are most likely to vote, and most uncertain about which party to vote for, are most likely to rely on issue positions rather than on political party affiliation or candidate images to guide them on which candidate or party to choose. Thus, the issues and candidates' stands on these issues are important in an election, even if the majority of voters do not vote on the basis of a candidate's stand on the issues.

Fletcher (1995, p. 364) found that 88% of a 1977 Ontario sample looked to the media for information concerning what sort of people the leaders were and approximately 66% used the media to find out the main issues of the campaign. 28% reported using the media as a basis for their voting decisions.

Yet, elections are influenced by television, as they tend to focus on party leaders while down-playing local candidates and issues (Courtney, 1980).

According to Patterson (1994), horse race and campaign strategies outplayed policy issues as news subjects by a ratio of three to one in U.S. presidential elections. The issues covered were embedded in a game schema in the 1992 presidential election,

Patterson (1994) also felt that voters see the campaign as fostering dialogue on key issues, while journalists see the campaign as a horserace. Coverage of campaign strategies may actually obscure important real issues in the campaign.

Our results suggest that issues were not downplayed at all in the 1995 Ontario election. There was no shortage of issue coverage. Table 3.11 displays the extent of coverage for all issues

coded. However, two of the most often covered issues in the 1995 election were the reporting of the election campaign itself and of poll results (“the horserace”). Along with coverage of the candidates’ records and their credibility these strategic issues were among the top half of the issue coverage.

Many of the substantive election issues had an economic basis: government spending, proposed tax cuts, healthcare, employment, welfare, labour, workfare,¹¹ the Social Contract, the economy, and privatization. Other election issues had a social component as well; these included workfare, education, “other” issues, equity, and local benefits to Windsor.

The campaign itself was covered in over 40% of all stories, followed by the coverage of the polls (horserace) with 30%; between 20% and 30% of the stories covered government spending and its effects on a balanced budget for Ontario, proposed tax cuts, healthcare, “other issues,” and employment issues. The issues of welfare, credibility of the candidates, labour issues, the records or past promises of those running for office, workfare and education were covered in more than 10% but less than 20% of the stories.

The economy as a specific issue received relatively little coverage in the media (8%); this was unexpected, as candidates and leaders are often judged by how well the economy is doing. However, the economy as a general issue may have been overshadowed by more specific economic issues, such as government spending, proposed tax cuts, healthcare, employment, welfare, workfare, labour and equity.

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Workfare was the name of a proposed Conservative policy requiring able bodied people to work for their welfare benefits.

The fact that “other issues” (which included the role of the media, public auto insurance, other parties, voter apathy, farmers forming unions, etc.) came in sixth (23%) in overall coverage also points to the abundance of specific issues in the 1995 election.

Using coverage of 10% and up as a threshold of issue importance, in the Windsor Star the following issues were important overall and at each level of coverage: the campaign itself, government spending, healthcare, polls/horserace, labour issues, and “other issues.”

The majority, (over 50.0%) of local coverage in the paper was about the campaign. In addition, local coverage in the Windsor Star focussed on the reporting of the polls, labour issues such as the repeal of Bill C-40, and the Social Contract, an NDP policy attacked by labour.

In the paper, at least at the local level, the economy and local benefits to Windsor and the surrounding area were given more coverage than on TV. The issues that were covered at the exclusively local also received coverage in stories involving both local and non-local election elements.

The local CBC featured coverage of the following issue (in descending order): “other” issues (like public auto insurance), credibility of the candidates and their policies, the polls, proposed tax cuts, employment, workfare, welfare, health, equity, and the records of the candidates.

Media and Elections

Table 3.11 Issues by media and election level

Media	n	Campaign	Polls	Spending	Tax cut	Health	Other Issues	Employment	Welfare	Credibility	Labour	Record	Workfare	Education	Social Contract	Debate	Economy	Equity	Local Benefits	Crime	Privatization	Values
Issue Type			*	*						*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Windsor Star																						
Only Local	37	51	21	16	8	22	11	8	5	0	6	11	3	11	16	12	5	0	9	0	3	0
Both	111	39	23	32	8	23	8	19	14	2	15	18	8	12	23	11	16	6	34	2	3	4
Non-Local	175	35	21	33	12	25	7	19	18	9	11	21	10	15	10	9	6	7	6	7	5	3
Total %	323	38	21	31	10	24	5	18	15	5	13	19	9	13	15	10	9	6	12	5	4	3
TV CBC																						
Only Local	1	100	0	0	0	0	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	0	0	0	0
Both	9	44	33	11	33	11	44	11	11	22	0	11	11	0	0	0	0	0	22	0	0	0
Non-Local	24	8	29	13	25	17	42	29	17	38	13	13	21	0	13	13	0	17	0	0	4	0
Total %	34	21	29	12	27	15	44	24	15	32	9	12	18	0	9	9	0	15	6	0	3	0
TV (Non-Local)																						
Only Local	4	75	33	11	25	0	0	50	0	25	25	0	0	0	50	0	25	0	33	0	0	0
Both	31	48	39	19	39	16	39	26	13	22	16	12	7	7	3	3	7	3	10	10	0	3
Non-Local	284	45	39	28	40	24	36	22	19	24	12	6	14	7	4	8	7	10	0	5	3	2
Total %	319	46	39	27	40	23	36	22	18	24	13	7	13	7	4	8	7	9	1	5	3	2
Overall %	676	41	30	28	25	23	23	20	17	15	13	13	11	10	10	8	8	8	7	5	3	2

Cell entries are row %: 51% of exclusively local coverage in the Windsor Star covers the campaign itself. *= strategy issues

Overall, on non-local TV the following issues were covered in at least 10% of stories reporting on the campaign: proposed tax cuts, polls, other issues, government spending and the budget, credibility, healthcare, employment, welfare, labour, and workfare.

On the provincial newscasts exclusively local coverage centred around the campaign itself, proposed tax cuts, the economy, jobs, credibility of those running for office, healthcare, “other” issues, labour, the social contract, and the economy. On non-local provincial TV newscasts, issues such as the campaign in general, polls, tax cut other issues, spending and candidate credibility were covered the most.

Fletcher (1995) found substantive coverage was being replaced by poll results and other strategic campaign issues. Researchers are concerned that too much coverage is devoted to who is leading and who is behind in an election (Patterson 1994, Sherrow 1992, and Traugott and Lavrakas 1996). Fletcher (1995) suggested voters may not pay attention to the election campaign until after the news media have lost interest in the substance of the campaign and are focusing on the horserace instead.

In this study, issues were divided the into two groups: campaign or strategy issue coverage deals with the campaign itself, the actors’ plans and activities, and public reaction to it. Substantive issue coverage refers to “real issues,” like tax cuts, government spending, employment, heath care, welfare, workfare, labour, equity, education, crime, privatization, and “other issues.”

While all types of issues received extensive coverage in the election, strategy issues were less prevalent than substantive ones. In our coding scheme, strategy issues accounted for 7 of 21

issues or one third of the issues coded, compared to 14 substance issues out of 21 total, or two thirds.

Table 3.12 outlines the distribution of issues between substantive and strategic issues in the data. Based on a total of 676 cases, only a little over a quarter of all stories (25.6%) were not issue oriented at all. The largest group of election stories included both strategy and substance issues (45.1%). Where only one type of issue was covered, the stories involved more substance alone (21.4%) than strategy issues alone (7.8%).

Table 3.12 Strategy issues by substantive issues

Issues		Substance		Total
		Mentioned	Not Mentioned	
Strategy	Mentioned	45.1	7.8	53
	Not Mentioned	21.4	25.6	47
Total %		66.6	33.4	100

Table entries are percentages of all stories: 45.1% of all stories covered both strategic and substantive issues (total N = 676).

Table 3.13 breaks issue coverage in various media down into strategy and substance issues. Was one type of issue given priority over the other in some media in this campaign?

Overall substantive (or real) issues covered more (66.6%) than strategy (or campaign) issues (53.0%). In the paper, the difference in the coverage was smallest: substantive issue coverage at 51.7% exceeded strategic issue coverage in the election by ten percent. On TV the

difference between the two issue types was larger: On non-local TV news, substantive issues were covered in 15% more stories than strategy issues (79.9% to 64.3%), while on the Windsor CBC news the difference was twice that large (82.4% to 52.9%). For all three media, the largest difference in types of issues covered (strategy vs. substance) occurred when the election stories involved exclusively non-local aspects of the election. There was less of a difference when the election stories involved both local and non-local elements than with non-local election elements alone. The gap between substantive issues and strategy issues is smaller in the paper but, overall, substance issues received more coverage in the 1995 election than strategic issues.

Table 3.13 Strategy and substance issues election coverage by media and election level

Media	Substance	Strategy	n
Windsor Star			
Only Local	5.4	5.4	37
Both	47.7	47.7	111
Non-Local	64.0	45.7	175
Total %	51.7	41.8	
TV CBC			
Only Local	0	0	1
Both	66.7	44.4	9
Non-Local	91.7	58.3	24
Total %	82.4	52.9	
TV (Non-Local)			
Only Local	0	0	31
Both	77.4	71.0	285
Non-Local	81.3	64.1	319
Total	79.9	64.3	
Overall	66.6	53.0	

Table entries are cell percentages: 5.4% of the exclusively local stories in the Windsor Star covered substance issues. Percentages do not sum to 100% in rows or columns.

Did the coverage of some provincial parties in the election focus more on strategic (or substantive) issues than stories about the other parties? Table 3.14 outlines the distribution of substance (real) issues and strategic (campaign) issues as associated with the three parties. Overall, about one third of the stories about provincial parties covered issues as well. Counting

all media there was less of a difference between the parties with respect to the coverage of substantive and strategic issues. Overall, all three parties received more coverage of real issues than strategy.

Table 3.14 Partisanship of issues by media and election level

Media	PC		Liberal		NDP	
Windsor Star	Substance	Strategy	Substance	Strategy	Substance	Strategy
Only Local	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Both	48.8	51.2	43.3	36.7	44.7	44.7
Non-Local	72.5	52.9	73.1	51.9	62.8	44.2
Total %	62.4	52.7	62.7	47	54.3	45.7
TV CBC						
Only Local	0	0	0	0	0	0
Both	25.0	50.0	50.0	0	80.0	40.0
Non-Local	87.5	50.0	87.5	37.5	100.0	60.0
Total %	66.7	50.0	80.0	30.0	90.0	50.0
TV (Non-Local)						
Only Local	0	33.3	0	0	0	0
Both	70.0	70.0	71.4	57.1	83.3	75.0
Non-Local	81.7	73.1	81.8	77.8	73.5	71.1
Total %	80.0	72.2	80.4	75.7	74.0	70.8
Overall %	65.7	62.7	63.9	61.5	65.7	58.1

Table entries are cell percentages: 100% all of the local Windsor Star stories concern substance issues.

In the paper, all three parties had more substantive issue coverage than strategic issue coverage.

On the local CBC the parties had the same pattern of coverage of the issues as in the paper, with the Liberals and NDP showing the greatest spread between the types of issue coverage, while in the PC stories substance and strategy issues were more closely balanced.

On provincial TV news the parties generally received the most issue coverage of all media, and in each case there were more substantive than strategy issue stories, with similar patterns for all three parties.

The general finding that the parties' coverage deals slightly more often with substantive issues than strategic ones fits in with the overall campaign coverage, where substantive issues were covered more frequently, but this finding contrasts with the literature.

Table 3.15 shows the distribution of issue coverage for all three leaders. All the leaders receive more issue coverage than their parties (see Table 3.14). Overall, the difference between types of issue coverage (substance v. strategy) was larger for the leaders than for the parties with the greatest difference for Harris receiving (17.7% more substantive issue coverage). McLeod received 16.8% more substantive than strategic coverage, while the difference was 14% for Rae.

Table 3.15 Partisanship of issues by media and election level involving the leaders

Media	Harris		McLeod		Rae	
Windsor Star	Substance	Strategy	Substance	Strategy	Substance	Strategy
Only Local	0	0	0	0	0	0
Both	57.1	49.0	48.4	35.5	57.1	50.0
Non-Local	73.8	51.3	71.3	51.3	70.4	54.9
Total %	67.4	50.4	64.9	46.8	66.7	53.5
TV CBC						
Only Local	0	0	0	0	0	0
Both	66.7	100.0	0	0	33.3	66.7
Non-Local	100.0	66.7	86.7	66.7	100	72.7
Total %	94.4	72.2	46.4	55.6	85.7	71.4
TV (Non-Local)						
Only Local	0	0	0	0	0	0
Both	93.8	93.8	92.3	84.6	87.5	81.3
Non-Local	84.7	65.3	83.6	67.3	85.4	70.1
Total %	85.5	67.7	84.3	68.6	78.8	55.8
Overall %	79.0	61.3	77.2	60.4	78.8	64.8

Table entries are cell percentages: in the paper 57.1% of combined stories ("Both") about Harris mention substantive issues.

Harris was most associated with issues of substance, such as proposed tax cuts (33.7%) and welfare cuts (23.7%), probably because of his plan to get people off welfare and into the workforce. McLeod was most associated (negatively) with the issue of credibility (24.2%). During the election the Conservatives portrayed her as wavering on the issues: in one TV ad a

cut-out of her head was put on a spinning weather vane implying that McLeod was not sure about her policy decisions. Rae had the most coverage on general reporting of the campaign (44.0%) and the horserace/polls (36.6%), followed by the coverage of healthcare (30.8%).

The extent of coverage and the types of issues covered varied little between before and after the poll change (data not shown). Issue coverage remained high and the balance between substantive and strategic issues change only a little. Surprisingly, there was no dramatic shift toward coverage of the “horserace” as the frontrunner changed.

Proposals for Ontario

A special type of “issue” are the election platforms put forward by the leaders. In their proposals, the leaders and their parties present their policies on a variety of election issues, outlining how they hope to govern Ontario. Harris proposed the “Common Sense Revolution for Ontario”, McLeod and the Liberals copied Chretien’s successful strategy and presented their “Redbook”, while Rae and the NDP did not put forth a formal platform but issued election statements largely reacting to Harris’ programme. Since the leaders design the policies to play to their strong suits, media coverage of these election platforms is likely to help the respective party or leader.

How much coverage did each platform receive separately or in combination with other platforms and in what medium? Table 3.16 outlines the distribution of coverage of party platforms in the media during the 1995 Ontario election.

Table 3.16 Coverage of party platforms by media and level of coverage

Media	Common Sense Total	Redbook Total	NDP Total	Common Sense Alone	Redbook Alone	NDP Proposals Alone	Redbook + Common Sense	Redbook + NDP	Common Sense + NDP	Redbook + NDP + Common Sense	n
Windsor Star											
Only Local	35.7	21.4	78.5	0	7.1	57.1	14.3	0	21.4	0	14
Both	34.5	30.7	73.0	7.7	11.5	46.2	7.7	7.7	15.3	3.8	26
Non-Local	47.3	47.3	45.5	20.0	23.6	25.4	10.9	3.6	7.3	9.1	55
Total %	42.1	38.9	57.9	13.7	17.9	35.8	10.5	4.2	12.0	6.3	
Total n	40	37	55	13	17	34	10	4	11	6	95
TV CBC											
Only Local	0	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Both	100.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Non-Local	50.0	37.5	25.0	37.5	25.0	25.0	12.5	0	0	0	8
Total %	55.5	33.3	22.2	44.4	22.2	22.2	11.1	0	0	0	
Total n	5	3	2	4	2	2	1	0	0	0	9
TV (Non-Local)											
Only Local	0	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Both	87.5	44.4	12.5	50.0	12.5	0	25.0	0	13.0	0	8
Non-Local	74.1	18.5	9.9	43.2	18.5	7.4	28.4	0	2.5	0	81
Total %	75.3	49.5	10.1	43.8	18.0	6.7	28.1	0	3.4	0	
Total n	67	41	9	39	16	6	25	0	3	0	89
Overall %	58.1	42.0	34.3	29.0	18.1	21.8	18.7	2.1	7.3	3.1	193

Table entries are row percentages: the "Common Sense Revolution" is covered in 33.3% of all local stories in the Windsor Star. The first three ("Total") columns sum to more than 100%.

Overall, the Common Sense Revolution received the most coverage. It was mentioned in over half (58.1%) of all stories, followed by the Liberal Redbook in 42.0%, and the policies of the NDP in 34.3%. Exclusive coverage of the PC's platform was provided in 29.0% of stories, while the NDP program was second with 21.8%, followed by the Liberal's Redbook with 18.9%. Overall, the Liberal Redbook and the Common Sense Revolution of the Conservatives were the platforms most often reported together (19.0%). All three platforms were covered together in only 3% of the stories.

The coverage of the three platforms is vastly different in the three media. In the local paper, coverage of the NDP outdistanced the other platforms with 57.9% of total coverage, followed by the Liberal Redbook in 42.1%, and the Conservative Common Sense Resolution in 38.9% of all stories.

In the Windsor Star the NDP proposals such as the "Agenda for the People" received by far the most coverage by itself. They were covered in 35.8% of the stories; in addition they were mentioned with the PC's Common Sense Revolution (11.6%) and with the Redbook (6.3%). The NDP policies are covered at the purely local and combined level considerably more than the other two platforms. However, in the non-local stories in the Windsor Star Harris' platform was covered as much or more than the other two.

On the local CBC newscasts party platforms are mentioned almost exclusively in non-local stories. Similar to the non-local stories in the Windsor Star, the PC's Common Sense Revolution alone and in combination received the greatest coverage with 55.5%, followed by coverage of the Redbook at 33.3% and NDP proposals at 22.2%.

On provincial TV the coverage of the Common Sense platform dominated the coverage with 75.5%. The Liberal program was covered in only half the stories and the NDP election platform was only mentioned in one out of ten stories.

Overall, about half of the platform coverage occurs alone, while the other half combines the coverage of more than one programme; the NDP was covered least often in combination. The most frequent combinations balanced coverage of the two top contenders (the Liberals and Conservatives), and only 3.3% of all stories mentioned all three party platforms.

Summary

Overall exclusively local coverage made up only 6.2% of the 1995 election coverage in the media studied. In both media, fewer than one third of the stories involved some local content. All media in this study focussed more on non-local election items, centered around the provincial leaders and issues.

The provincial election itself as an event did not receive top billing in the paper or on local or provincial newscasts. Local stories varied in importance depending on the phase of the election. In the paper, local election stories initially received high attention; they decreased as election advertising and the campaigns of the leaders began. On TV the average importance for purely local and purely non-local election items increased while it decreased for stories combining local and non-local elements. Even though there were fewer combined local and non-local election stories they had higher average importance.

At the exclusively local level issues were covered less. In the paper, issues were covered a bit more when the story contained both local and non-local items. On TV the coverage of issues at the non-local level dominated.

Issues in the election coverage include both strategy issues, dealing with the general reporting of the campaign, and substantive or “real” issues.

All the parties involved in the election were covered most in non-local stories and least in local stories in all media. The provincial PC’s received the most coverage.

The local PC candidates received less coverage overall than the other local candidates who were covered about equally. The local PC’s received less coverage than the other parties both because they had not been in power since 1985 at Queen’s Park and because the Southwestern region of Ontario had not elected a local provincial PC in recent memory (the last was Ivan Thrasher in 1964). However, in the Windsor Star the local PC candidates received more coverage. The possibility that the Conservatives might win the election no doubt affected the election coverage.

Polls often give some direction to election coverage and can predict the fortunes of leaders and their parties. The PC party seemed to benefit from the steady rise in the polls by Harris. McLeod’s and Premier Rae’s coverages decreased after the poll change in favour of Harris while their parties’ coverage rose slightly.

The platforms of the leaders did play a role in the coverage of the 1995 election. However, the coverage differed depending on the media in which the platforms were featured. In

the local paper NDP policies garnered the most attention, but on provincial TV the Common Sense Revolution received the most coverage by far.

Chapter 4: Summary

Introduction

This chapter summarizes the results of the analyses to answer the following questions: How did the extent of local coverage compare with non-local coverage of the 1995 provincial election? Were issues of substance in the campaign overtaken by strategic ones? Were the local candidates covered in the media? Was the election coverage equally distributed among all those involved? Did the status of candidates affect coverage? Did any one election programme receive more coverage? In addition, the limitations of the study and suggestions for further research will be addressed.

Local coverage of the provincial election barely existed

While the coverage of the provincial election from an exclusively local perspective, in this case Windsor, existed, it was a very small piece of the overall election coverage. Elections are increasingly centralized events, decreasing the likelihood of coverage of the local aspects of the election. In Windsor, in the 1995 Ontario election, voters were given little exposure to the local events of the provincial election. While the extent of local coverage differed for different types of media, as well as locally versus provincially based media, all media tended to focus on non-local aspects of the provincial election.

Non-local coverage dominates over local election coverage

Exclusively local election stories made up a small percentage of the total election stories covered in both media. In all media in this study, the local contest was covered in less than one third of the election stories. Both newspaper and television covered non-local election stories centred around the provincial campaign, the leaders, and the issues. But there was a clear gap between the paper and television: the Windsor Star covered the purely local side of the 1995 provincial election more extensively than did television.

Combined election coverage is greater than local coverage

Local coverage of the election received more consideration by the media when one considers stories that combined local with non-local elements, such as issues or leaders. All media carried more stories combining both local and non-local elements than purely local ones. However, the paper exceeded both local and provincial TV in this regard, too. The gap may exist because of the nature of each medium. Most newspapers, let alone a local daily, cannot afford to send reporters on the buses with the candidates, therefore papers follow the local election more closely. On the other hand, local TV newscasts may not have the resources to follow the local election scene as closely as papers, and their election coverage shows the trickle down effect, in that they re-broadcast election stories from their parent stations.

It was typical for the purely local coverage of local candidates to appear in articles that were little more than ads, including who the candidates were, their occupation and their stand on issues in brief. When local concerns or candidates were covered they were often discussed in

conjunction with a leader. Many of the local issues, concerns, and benefits receive coverage in the form of editorials and letters to the editor rather than front page stories in the Windsor Star.

Greater exposure to the provincial campaign throughout the campaign.

Voters were exposed to the provincial campaign more than to local election stories, due to the overwhelming coverage of provincial issues and leaders.

This pattern of coverage persisted over the course of the election. Election coverage overall increased marginally, and most of the increase was in stories covering both local and non-local aspects of the campaign.

Election stories tend to have more than one focus

Election stories often covered more than one level of the election by including both local and provincial aspects of the election. In addition, many stories focussed on more than one aspect: they reported on leaders, issues, and the provincial side of the election as well as on the local election.

Overall, issues received the most coverage in the 1995

Issues were covered more frequently in the election coverage than any other topic - contrary to the expectations gleaned from the literature. Also in contrast with the literature, issue coverage almost equally covered substantive and strategic (campaign) issues - if anything, the former outweighed the latter, although many stories covered both aspects. Only about one quarter

of all stories made no references to issues. Due to the tendency of television coverage to cover and follow the leader buses as they travel on the campaign trail, leader coverage was second only to issue coverage and exceeded issue coverage on provincial TV. Provincial party coverage was not much lower than leader coverage, and there was not much difference between overall coverage for the local and provincial parties. On TV, local parties received the least amount of coverage.

Local candidates received the most coverage in the newspaper

The coverage of local candidates in the media followed a predictable pattern. The newspaper led in the coverage of local candidates, followed by the local CBC, and finally non-local TV. The paper as well as TV covered local candidates most in purely local stories. In contrast, because of their link with their leaders, parties were covered most in election stories dealing with local and non-local aspects.

Not surprisingly, local candidates received the most coverage at the local level in all media.

Overall, election coverage was even among all parties

Election coverage was quite equally distributed across all parties and their leaders, but the change in the polls, with the lead switching from McLeod to Harris, allowed Harris and his party to receive more prominent coverage after the change in the polls.

In general, the leaders (Harris, McLeod, and Rae), received more coverage in the media than their provincial parties, local parties and the local candidates.

Harris was covered the most, followed closely by McLeod and Rae; this same pattern emerged in all media in this study. In the Windsor Star coverage of all candidates declined after the poll change; however, Harris' coverage dropped the least, while his opponents' coverage declined more.

Status of candidates influences coverage

The status of a candidate (leader, incumbent, or challenger) influenced coverage patterns in two ways: status before the election, and the position of the candidate in the election as determined by the polls. Even though Bob Rae was a distant third in the polls, he received considerable coverage as the incumbent. Only Harris saw an increase in coverage on TV when the polls changed in his favour. In contrast, the coverage for both McLeod and Rae declined after the lead in the polls changed.

Overall, the PC's coverage increased substantially after the poll change, coinciding with the party's increase in the polls. However, the coverage of the Liberals and NDP did not suffer dramatically after their leaders dropped in the polls.

Harris benefits most from coverage of platforms

In combination, as well as alone, Harris' platform, the Common Sense Revolution, received the most coverage. It was mentioned in over half of all stories, followed by the Liberal

Redbook and the policies of the NDP. The Redbook and the Common Sense Revolution were most often reported together.

Coverage of the three platforms was very different in the three media. In the local paper, coverage of the NDP outdistanced the other platforms. Conversely, in the non-local stories in the Windsor Star, the PC Common Sense Revolution alone and in combination received the greatest coverage. On provincial TV the coverage of the Common Sense platform dominated the coverage, the Liberal Redbook was covered in only half the stories, while the NDP election platform was mentioned very little.

Limitations of the Research

The results of this research are limited in several ways. First, the study of local coverage of provincial elections was limited to one election. The current study should be followed up by studies of the 1999 provincial election and other provincial elections to determine whether there are differences in the way the local portion of the provincial election was covered or whether the 1995 election was typical in this regard. Second, the news coverage of CHWI in Windsor was not taped at all, and the taping specifications excluded the local CBC broadcast at 5:30 p.m. Therefore, the number of local stories was lower than it might have been. Third, the study was limited to Windsor, Ontario. The local election coverage of elections may be unique to Windsor, as Windsor shares a border with the United States and has access to American news and programming. Perhaps, the undeniable American influence in Windsor causes the local aspects of an Ontario election to be ignored even more. Also, the fact that Windsor is a blue collar town

may influence election coverage as compared with a white collar town like London. Another factor influencing the amount of local coverage may be that the voting patterns in Windsor have been fairly consistent throughout the years (but different from the province as a whole), with seats being won by Liberal or NDP, but not by Conservative candidates. Fourth, this study examined a one newspaper town; the mere presence of two papers might change how and how much the local part of an election is covered. Finally, this study did not include other papers, such as the Globe and Mail, or other Southam chain papers.

Suggestions for Further Research

The current study should be followed up by studies of the 1999 provincial election and subsequent ones to examine variations in local coverage overtime and across localities.

Also, future studies should consider not only the amount of coverage received by those involved in the election, but also the tone of the coverage (positive, neutral, or negative), and changes in tone over the course of the campaign. By rating the tone of the coverage of the leaders, provincial and local parties, and issues, researchers could determine which issues, local candidates, parties or leaders were reported in what balance by which network and paper.

Another reason this study should be followed up is that the leaders of all three provincial parties have changed since 1995. Will the change in leadership of the parties change local coverage or coverage overall? For instance, Harris was from North Bay, whereas Eves was born in Windsor, Ontario, and has ties to Windsor. Will this make a difference in how and how much the local portion of the provincial election will be covered in the upcoming election?

Conclusion

Since each local election and each local media configuration is somewhat unique, a broader understanding of the local coverage of a local election can only emerge from case studies covering a variety of elections and places. It is hoped that this study has contributed in a small way at the local level to the understanding of media election coverage.

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Appendixes

Appendix A: Coding sheet: Windsor Star

1	Story Title	
2	Story #	
3	Coder	
4	Column Length	

Story Date

5	Day	
6	Month	

Story Placement

7	Above Crease	1
	Below Crease	2

Story Source

8	Windsor Star	1
	Southam Paper	2
	Wire Services	3

Story Style

9	Just Photo	1
	Just Text	2
	Photo & Text	3
	Graphic	4
	Graphic & text	5
	Cartoon	6
	Graphic, photo & text	7

Story Type

10	Front Page	1
	Inside Page	2
	Editorials	3
	Letters to Editor	4
	Cartoons	5

Story Focus (if mentioned = 1) (else = 0)

11	Provincial Focus	1
12	Local Focus	1
13	Leader Focussed	1
14	Local Candidate Focussed	1
15	Issue Focussed	1

Crowd Response

		Pos	Net	Neg
16	Rae	1	2	3
17	McLeod	1	2	3
18	Harris	1	2	3

Lead Story

19	Yes	1
	No	2
20	Red book	1
	Common Sense	2
	NDP Prop's	3
	R+CS	4
	R+NDP	5
	CS+NDP	6
	R+CS+NDP	7

Story Topic (if mentioned = 1) (else = 0)

21	Polls Horse Race Coverage	1
22	Education	1
23	Values	1
24	Gov't Spending Balanced Budget	1
25	Economy	1
26	Employment	1
27	Equity	1
28	Welfare	1
29	Work/Workfare	1
30	Labour/union	1
31	Crime	1
32	Health care	1
33	Campaign coverage	1
34	Social Contract	1
35	Privatization	1
36	Federal Liberals	1
37	Federal Conservatives	1
38	Experts Cited	1
39	Record/Past Promises	1
40	Local benefits	1
41	Tax cut	1
42	Debate/election procedures	1
43	Credibility/promises	1
44	Other issues	1

Leaders/Candidates

		Positive	Neutral	Negative	Not Mentioned
45	Rae	1	2	3	4
46	McLeod	1	2	3	4
47	Harris	1	2	3	4
48	NDP	1	2	3	4
49	Liberal	1	2	3	4
50	PC	1	2	3	4
51	NDP Local	1	2	3	4
52	Liberal Local	1	2	3	4
53	PC Local	1	2	3	4

Appendix B: Coding sheet: TV

1	Story Title	
2	Tape #	
3	Coder	
4	Broadcast time	
5	run time sec's	

Story Date

6	Day	
7	Month	

Story Placement

8	Story number	
9	Total stories	

Story Source

10	CBC	1
	CTV	2
	GLOBAL	3

Story Style

11	on location Visuals	1
	Not on location visuals	2
12	Promo	1
	No Promo	2

Story Type

13	anchor only	1
	anchor & reporter	2
	Reporter Only	3

Media and Elections

Story Focus (if mentioned = 1) (else = 0)

14	Provincial Focused	1
15	Local Focused	1
16	Leader Focused	1
17	Local Candidate Focused	1
18	Issue Focused	1

Crowd Response

		Pos	Net	Neg
19	Rae/NDP	1	2	3
20	McLeod/Liberal	1	2	3
21	Harris/PC	1	2	3

22	Redbook	1
	Common Sense	2
	NDP Prop's	3
	R+CS	4
	R+NDP	5
	CS+NDP	6
	R+CS+NDP	7

Story Topic (if mentioned = 1) (else = 0)

23	Polls Horse Race Coverage	1
24	Education	1
25	Values	1
26	Gov't Spending Balanced Budget	1
27	Economy	1
28	Employment	1
29	Equity	1
30	Welfare	1
31	Work/Workfare	1
32	Labor/union leg. Bill C40	1
33	Crime	1
34	Health care	1
35	Campaign coverage	1
36	social contract	1
37	privatization	1
38	federal liberals	1
39	federal conservatives	1
40	experts cited	1
41	record past promises	1
42	local benefits	1
43	tax cut	1
44	debate election procedures	1
45	Credibility/Promises	1
46	Other	1

Leaders/Candidates

		Pos	Net	Neg	Not Mentioned
53	Rae	1	2	3	4
54	McLeod	1	2	3	4
55	Harris	1	2	3	4
56	NDP	1	2	3	4
57	Liberal	1	2	3	4
58	PC	1	2	3	4
59	NDP Local	1	2	3	4
60	Liberal Local	1	2	3	4
61	PC Local	1	2	3	4

Appendix C: Intercoder reliability results (% agreement)

Story Number	Story Characteristics %	Evaluations %	Topics %
6	72.7	66.7	91.3
16	90.9	83.3	87.0
26	81.8	91.7	95.7
36	72.7	91.7	100.0
46	90.9	66.7	82.6
56	81.8	66.7	78.3
66	91.0	75.0	100.0
76	81.8	66.7	87.0
86	91.0	75.0	87.0
96	81.8	41.7	95.7
106	81.8	50.0	74.0
116	90.9	83.3	82.6
126	90.9	91.7	100.0
136	90.9	83.3	87.0
146	90.9	66.7	100.0
156	90.9	75.0	100.0
166	81.8	66.7	91.3
176	81.8	33.3	87.0
186	90.9	50.0	91.3
196	81.8	58.3	91.3
206	81.8	50.0	91.3
216	72.7	66.7	78.3
226	81.8	91.7	95.7
236	72.7	75.0	91.3
246	45.5	58.3	95.7
256	82.9	83.3	87.0
Total 265 stories	83.0	70.0	87.0

Appendix D: Importance Index

Each variable was recoded on a scale of 0 to 2 where 0 indicates the least importance and 2 indicates high importance.

The importance variables for the Windsor Star stories were:

- above (2) or below(1) the crease of the paper;
- a lead story in the paper (2), non lead (0);
- column length 0 to 30 cm (0), 31 to 45 cm (1), 45 cm and above (2);
- photo and text (2), just text (1), just photo (0);
- front page (2), inside page (1);
- the position in which the story appeared in the paper: 1 or 2 (2), 3 to 6 (1), later (0).

The importance variables for the TV stories were:

- the presence of a promo introducing a TV story (2); no promo (0)
- the length of the TV stories in seconds, 0 to 60 s (0), 61 to 90s (1); 91s to highest (2);
- on location visuals (2), non-location visuals (0);
- anchor and reporter (2), anchor only (1), reporter only (0);
- the position in which the story appeared on TV: 1 or 2 (2), 3 to 6 (1), later (0).

The Importance Index is the mean of the constituent variables.

Vita Auctoris

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